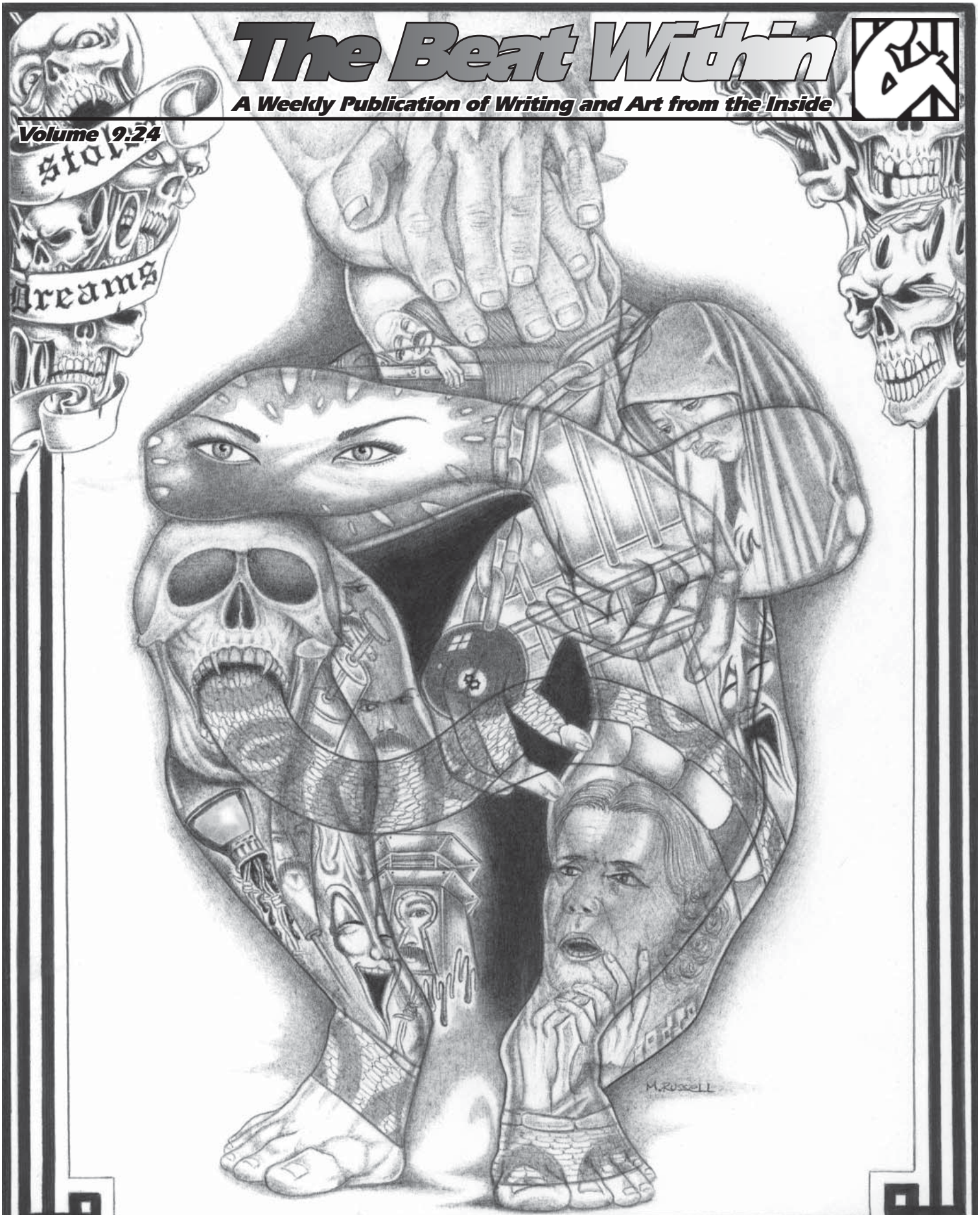
The Beat Within

A Weekly Publication of Writing and Art from the Inside

Volume 9.24



Editor's Note

We read in this morning's newspaper that former President Bill Clinton is in San Francisco today signing (and selling) his new book, "My Life." Afterwards, they're taking him all around this beautiful city (and what a beautiful day for it!). He'll probably see the Golden Gate Bridge, Fisherman's Wharf, SBC Park and Golden Gate Park, the newly remodeled Ferry Building, the Financial District, the Castro and North Beach, Chinatown, Grace Cathedral and other equally impressive sights in this impressive city.

But we're just as sure that they won't be taking him to a lot of other places that exist side-by-side with these popular tourist destinations, and are just as much a part of the city: Hunter's Point, Sunnydale, Fillmore, Lakeview, deep in the Mission, the Tenderloin, etc. Oh, he'll hear about these places all right. After all, there were four murders in San Francisco leading up to his visit, so he'll get an earful about certain places. But he won't hear from the people who live in those places, because he won't be going there.

Which is more real, Fisherman's Wharf or the TL? What reflects the lives of real people more, the Financial District or the Mission? It's hard to understand why these powerful folks avoid these very real places where so many of the young people we meet every week in the Halls come from. Are they afraid for their personal safety? With all their police security, that doesn't seem very likely. Or are they just afraid that they have nothing to offer, nothing to say to people in the 'hood, nothing but empty words and meaningless promises? Do they feel guilty just knowing that such devastated neighborhoods can exist side-by-side with some of the richest people in the world? (Or, do they just calculate that there aren't that many votes to be gathered?)

We remember a few years ago when a candidate for President of the United States (Republican Bob Dole) came to town to campaign for President. He went to San Quentin State Prison, but he didn't go in, he didn't meet or talk to any prisoners. Instead, he cut a campaign commercial standing in front of the closed gate and announced that if he was the President he would speed up the executions that take place behind those walls!

Why is that? Why wouldn't he risk talking with people already safely in custody? How come he was willing to use the prisoners in San Quentin as props for his campaign, but unwilling to listen to any one of them?

It isn't just Clinton and Dole, either. Way back last November (eight months ago), we wrote a letter to Oakland's Mayor Jerry Brown inviting him to come to a Beat workshop in Alameda County so he could learn more about the lives of the people in his city. We gave him all the possible dates, set it up with the institution, and waited to hear back. After waiting more than two months, we telephoned his office and were told they never got the letter! So, we sent a second letter extending a second invitation. Six months later, we're still waiting for a reply, but we're not holding our breath.

At the beginning of this year, we also wrote to San Francisco's new mayor, Gavin Newsom, inviting him to attend a Beat writing workshop at YGC where he, too, would get an insight into the lives of our young writers that only they can provide. We are still waiting for his reply, too, but at least we have seen in him a willingness to do what none of his predecessors did: go to the Point, to the TL, to the Moe, and talk to people, including gang members and crime victims. We know he's getting an eye full as well as an ear full, but we also know he'd learn a whole lot more if he went with us to a workshop.

Given that these leaders (and the general public they "represent") don't really want to be disturbed with guilty knowledge, we wonder if you know just how powerful and important The Beat Within is. Which is another way of asking if you know how powerful and important you are, because you are The Beat Within.

The Beat is a window to a world that the so-called "good" people of the city and the state and the country would rather not see. The President, the Governor, the Mayor and those "good" citizens don't need a magazine to tell them about life in the upscale neighborhoods they live in (or get guided tours in). But how can they ever know what happens in those other neighborhoods, those "bad" places we keep hidden? If they won't see it with their own eyes, then your eyes become all the more important. But how can they see what you see?

Our answer is The Beat Within! One reason we are so proud of this publication is because we know what you write is read by people who might never even give you a thought if it weren't for The Beat. We started The Beat to give a voice to young people, but a voice is useless without an ear to hear it. By keeping it real, you have allowed the deaf to hear and the blind to see.

As we wrote in our letter inviting Mayor Newsom to the Hall, "For those of us on the outside, The Beat provides a unique window into a world few of us can even imagine. In each issue, these young men and women paint verbal pictures of lives filled with violence in their homes and on the streets, lives self-medicated by drugs and alcohol, lives of parental abandonment and abuse. Yet, in addition to their rage and despair, they also convey the exuberance of youthful hope in poetry, prose and drawing that regularly leaves us breathless. Through The Beat, these seldom-told stories reach a growing audience that includes judges, probation officers, police officers, community workers, as well as the families of the incarcerated."

Sometimes we know we sound like we're blowing our own horn, and to be real, we are! We think The Beat is one of the finest publications available, and every one of us is proud to be associated with it. But to keep it really real, it's not our horn we're blowing but yours. The Beat provides an opportunity for young people to step up big and teach, and every week, week after week, year after year, there are enough of you who take seriously that responsibility to open that window a little more, to teach a little more, to bare your souls a little more. Without you, there is no us, and without us that window would be slammed!

So, while we admire President Clinton for climbing out of a difficult and abusive childhood himself to become President, and while we acknowledge the accomplishments of Mayors Brown and Newsom, we think they are being sheltered from a reality that is too painful for politicians to acknowledge. And we think that you can and do cut through that protective layer with every word you spit in this "rag" that we're so proud of.

It's OK for our leaders to visit Disneyland as long as they don't confuse it with reality. It is truly an awesome responsibility you have to "keep it real" for those who don't want it real. Those of you who work each week to put down real words of real lives in our pages are doing much more than you know. We believe that years and years from now, scholars will read The Beat to learn what life was really like in those places that Clinton and the others will never visit. That puts a lot of weight on your shoulders, but we know you're up to the task. It is a task you step up to every time you put pencil to paper.

The Beat you're holding in your hand is another example of what we're talking about. Our first topic, "Right From Wrong?" gets right into people's heads and souls by questioning their beliefs, their consciences, their religion. We asked:

"Some people think it's wrong to sell drugs. They view it as selling poison. Other people say it's okay to sell drugs because they're doing it so they can feed their family. Now what we want to challenge you with this week is — how do you define right from wrong? Is it wrong to sell drugs, rob, steal, rape, murder? And where do your morals come from? Are some of these things wrong all the time or just sometimes? And why?"

Our second topic, "Father Figure," questions who plays the role of father in our writers' lives:

"Fathers play an important role throughout an individual's life. They help mold you as a child, scold you as a teenager, and even when you become an adult, you run to them for advice. Some of us are fortunate to have our biological (birth) fathers in our lives, while others confide in male relatives, childhood friends, and in some cases God to play the fatherly role in our lives. Who in your life plays the fatherly role? Is it your biological father, stepfather, uncle, spiritual father, grandfather, an OG in the neighborhood, or someone you grew up around? Why do you look up to them? Are they a positive influence in your life? Has that person been there for you through thick and think? So tell us about your father figure."

Our last, short topic was: "I need help with..."

As with every issue of The Beat, there are some outstanding pieces, and we have to acknowledge them here.

Out of 150 we have a host of powerful writers to acknowledge, from The Gypsy, with his introspective flow, "My Own Worst Enemy," to the heartfelt tribute by Latosha, who gives us her gem of piece titled, "My Sister's Death." We have the consistent Lil' Youngin who steps big again with "Lil' Youngin's Questions and Answers." Then there's the sad, sad poem by Domo titled, "Waiting." Wow! Toni keeps it both real and entertaining with his spiritual piece/flow titled, "Dear God, Jesus and The Virgin Mary." The talented Peaches drops a terrific and thought-provoking poem, "It's The Law Rap," as does Jason, from Marin, who delivers a beautiful tribute called "Fire - Dedicated To My Mom."

And there's more POWs, ed note readers! We are very honored to feature Cudabeez from SF/YGC, who hits a home run with "Woke Up." And as we work our way back to 150, we have the mighty Abbas who gives us a mature outlook on "Freedom", while Joyce drops her beautiful lyrics in tribute to her lost friend, "Sad Angel/Broken Tear." Last but never least, we have Ray from the 150 crew with his own take on "Freedom."

What amazing writing, and we're not even talking strictly about you powerful POW writers; we're talking about every single contributor featured in this very important issue of The Beat Within. Thanks!

There's just one month left to submit pieces for our current Editor's Note Writing Contest (our tenth): What is your all-time favorite movie and why? Do you like love stories, horror, crime and punishment, or musicals? What was it about that movie you loved so much? Top prize for this contest is a $100 money order, followed by a $50 M.O. for second, while third and fourth places will earn the writers $25 each. Deadline: July 31. We hope you have some fun with this one.

Let's end this note with an invitation to y'all. Since we can't seem to interest those "important" people to come to the Halls, we invite you to step up big the next time you're in a Beat workshop — think of these "leaders" as your audience, and show them a world they won't otherwise see. It's up to you, and you're up to it!

Table Of Contents

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our commuities already–we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

Co–founders: Sandy Close and David Inocencio

Senior Editors: David Inocencio and Donna Hunter

Assistant Editors: Michael Kroll, Allan Martinez, Matt Melamed and Arlene Mitri.

Graphics/Layout Editors: Manen Pau and Eric Strenger

Staff: Pauline Craig, Jason Treas, Allan Tinker, David Muhammad, Jill Wolfson, Patricia Johnson, Jason Tuufuli, Krystal Sipp, Fanny Duong, Vilasak Thebpanya, Amanda Ables, Mervyn Wool, Omar Turcious, Dennis Morton, Keir Davidson, Daniela Rible, Roy Hodgson, Yvette Coronado-Mercer, Will Roy, Janea Asis, Joselito Delos-Reyes, Devin Melvin, and Rene Aragon.

Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

Spiritual Advisor: Jack Jacqua

Book Donor: Marisela Norte

Beat Supporters: The Beat Within greatfully acknowledges the generous support of funders of Pacific News Service's Youth Communications Programs – Annie E. Casey Foundation, California Arts Council, California Wellness Foundation, Community Foundation of Silicon Valley, Community Technology Foundation of California, Compton Foundation, Creative Work Fund, Cricket Island Foundation, Evelyn & Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, Ford Foundation, Free Speech TV, Hewlett Foundation, James Irvine Foundation, Louis R. Lurie Foundation, Marguerite Casey Foundation, Morris Stulsaft Foundation, Nathan Cummings Foundation, Oakland Fund For Children & Youth, Open Society Institute, Peninsula Community Foundation, Richard Rhoda Goldman Fund, Rockefeller Foundation, S.H. Cowell Foundation, San Francisco Arts Commision, Shinnyo-en Foundation, Stone Foundation, Stuart Foundation, Surdna Foundation, California Endowment, Tides Foundation, Van Loben Sels/Renbe Rock Foundation, Vanguard Public Foundation, Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation, Walter S. Johnson Foundation, Youth Justice Funding Collaborative, and the Zellerbach Family Fund.

Writers: Thanks to all the participants in our workshops in the San Francisco's Youth Guidence Center and Log Cabin Ranch School and the Walden House Facility, Maricopa County, Arizona, Walden House, Canon Barcus Community Center, San Mateo, Napa, Santa Clara, San Luis Obispo, Alameda County, Santa Cruz County and Marin County Juvenile Halls. As well as Riker's Island in New York City, Natural Bridge in Virginia, and Hidden Truth in Rhode Island. If you have any questions or comments about The Beat Within, or if you would like to become a subscriber, contact us at: 275 Ninth St. SF.CA. 94103 or call (415)503-4170 or check us out at

www.thebeatwithin.org

Editor's Note	2
Piece of the Week	4
Co-Piece of the Week	9
Standouts	12
Voices In Spanish	27
Listening	28
Habits	31
Weekly Writings	34
The Beat Without	41

Pieces Of the Week

My Own Worst Enemy

I don't know what it is
I'll know when it comes
But I'll never be waiting here for death
Inside the darkness
I stand still, alone, and cold
The night drags on
It feels like I've been asleep for a hundred years
No one seems to care, but the darkness it will bear
The love of time that's gone by
People stare and ask what my Weariness means,
but they will never know
Because all they do is stare
And see that I am going nowhere
I need a listening ear
to know that I do fear
If the ear I seek cannot be found
I do not look to the ground
I don't give up and run away
I try again another day
If nothing works and no one's there
I know someone who will care
The one who cares
will always be there
Someone I can talk to when I cry
And I don't stop until my eyes are dry
Once there is no more fear, I don't know who will be there.

I live my life like quiet mice
I even think I am too nice
I feel like a little grain of rice
And that doesn't feel nice
Sometimes I wish I felt like ice
Ice and rice,
what a nice feeling for my nights
This is me fighting with myself!
May I ask you something?
Why do you follow me?
Every time I turn around
You are there on the back of my neck at all times
When I wake up to wash up,
who do I see?
Is it not obvious?
You again
Thinking why — it is you!
Another day with you telling me things that I don't like to hear
It is like every time I look at you
I know it's a fight.
Yes, all throughout the night
I feel like I am at war
A war that will never stop
That war that I am fighting is within
I fight no other enemy, but me
The worst enemy that I ever saw
Is the one that I am fighting
The battle within
The battle is ferocious
Just hearing one or two explosions
Makes me crawl back into a place dark as the war itself
Still eager to win and succeed
I go on thinking to myself
Why must I fight an enemy that got the same techniques as me?
I think, talking to the enemy why must me and you be enemies?
Why is it when I think of something good,
You send out your bombs?
Making everything corrupt and on fire
Making me do
the things that are wrong
For now, I'm losing to myself
But one day soon to come
We will fight as one
Both fighting for what is good
But for now the fight goes on
My thoughts are my enemy
Never letting me be
So that's why I say the fight goes on,
knowing one day the war within me will end,
And I will prevail.

-The Gypsy, 150 Crew

From the Beat: You've already prevailed. Think about it, you consider yourself the good one and your alter ego the bad one. You talk about as though you're a step away from acting like you never had one. We commend you for this and encourage you to keep fighting. Also, if it helps, you have skills so you should battle yourself through writing. When you look back on this piece, you'll see things clearer and hopefully will make the right choice. It's not weird to have a good person and a bad person talking to you as long as you take heed to the right voice.

Crying won't bring her back. Let her rest I peace." In memory of my sister, Nika.

My Sister's Death

One day she was outside. She fell and hit her head. She was seven in 2003. And then she went into a coma — and found out she had a brain tumor.

I feel sad because that was my little sister. We were closer than me and my older sister. I shared half of my life with her. I used to take her to the hospital — radiation for her head. I'd carry her up and down the stairs. I used to put on her fetal machine.

Before she was sick, she used to always go back and forth to the store to buy some hot chips and dry salami. We used to always work and play together, doing homework. One thing we did the most, was dance — I'd put her on my neck, and she'd go dumb, dancin'!

My lil' brother, he used to always say, "Man, I wish Nika was here. We used to do … [this and that]!" They would play together. They were the young ones.

When we'd go to the graveyard, I would talk and talk to her. People would say, "Why are you sitting there and talking to yourself?" And I would say, "I ain't talking to myself!"

Like now I have a lot of pictures of her in my room. I like seeing pictures of her, but now my mama don't like going in my room.

Nika asked me once, "Am I gonna die?" And I told her, "No. If you die, I'm gonna die with you."

So if I could talk to Nika right now, I wouldn't know what to tell her, except to say that I love h y family to be strong and keep your head up; don't stress up.

They cried. I told them, "Crying won't bring her back. Let her rest I peace." In memory of my sister, Nika. RIP Nika.

-Latosha, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your memorial piece to your little sister, Nika, is a gem, a jewel shining with love and affection. There are so many wonderful details of your life together, both before and after her illness — and even after her death, when you talk to her in the graveyard. Every single paragraph of your piece is a diamond shining with love for Nika, and for the rest of your family, too. Thank you for writing this! RIP Nika.

Lil' Youngin's Questions And Answers

Q: Do you believe you can turn tragedy into triumph?
A: If you really wanna change and you believe in yourself that you can change, you will. I do believe I can turn tragedy into triumph. It's my state of mind that makes me wanna turn tragedy into triumph. Like me coming up in the streets and going through some of stuff that I went through, that's a tragedy, feel me? But, the outcome of that tragedy is it is better than it has ever been. Now I know what I want out of life. Before, I was lost without guidance feeling alone in the world.

Q: Who has hurt you? Who have you hurt?
A: What hurt me the most was my dad not being there for me. I felt like he should have been when I need those talks, and that father figure, and I felt left out 'cause I didn't have it. It seemed like a ghost in and out of my life, so I ended up losing most of my childhood tryin' to be man and finding out stuff that my father could have told me. Getting wrapped up losing most of that childhood, and now that he came back into the picture, once more I feel like I ain't told him to "kahoot", (leave me alone — cut). I'm listening 'cause everybody needs help once in a while. I've hurt a few people, having a lot on my shoulders, closed emotions, a cold heart, no feelings for no strangers, just myself. Geekin' on my family and people that cared who were just tryin' to help, geekin' on my lil' female, my main thang, makin' her cry and not worried about it. Even though I am locked up, she's still there fore me writing letters, sending pictures, answering phone calls, and coming to court dates. I've hurt my mom by saying I was done a long time ago and ended up getting wrapped back up and hurtin' her. I even hurt myself over the years by not showing no remorse and feelings.

Q: Do you ever have a guilty conscience?
A: My guilt conscience is me 'cause I made that choice myself. I hear it in my head tellin' me do this, you won't wrapped up for this. It's cool. Don't trip, but the whole time it's out to get me. I think being so evil and acting wild that guilty conscience fell into place along with the way I was acting. It fell into the place of my mentality and my state of mind. I was being really shady towards people and myself, letting myself fall short of things that should've been my main priority when it came to self.

Q: Have you ever been rejected? What happened? What did you feel?
A: I ain't never been rejected. I do feel I rejected myself out of things that should have happened, like school, going on further. I feel I was rejected and restricted of my own dreams like there never was. I'll just brush it off my shoulder like nothin' never happened and leave it in the pass. That's the only rejection I felt. Now that I look back, I feel stupid and silly 'cause I could have been further in life, out of trouble, relaxing, and chillin'.

Q: How do rumors get started? What good/evil start from rumors?
A: Some rumors get started off of what a ninja heard or what somebody else told them, or what they heard, the he said, she said deal. Most of the time, they're lies. Sometimes they 're true, but nobody should go off a rumor. They should find out if the rumor is real yo' self. That's how some ninjas be getting wrapped up, feel me? Sometimes, it ma be a two-way sword, so either way you go about it, you end up gettin' stabbed by that sword. Like somebody once told me, he said he's going smoke you on sight. It might be true. It might not, so if I go ahead and believe it, and scream loud before he can get me and get wrapped up, feel me? Then, it could be like dude that told you heard something and changed it around to be like he ready to snuff you, but really you ain't never felt like you can trust him. Nothing good comes out of rumors, and anyways, you wouldn't want nobody runnin' around tellin' you about the next ninjas problems. You are your own person.

Q: How did you get started in the game?
A: It was like I grew up into it, living in that lifestyle. My dad and older brother were born into it. It just snuck up on me. It was the love of the money. I started out runnin' the streets. Then it escalated to me just being the streets, hustlin', grindin' all of it, not lettin' it go, but I never called it a game 'cause it's more serious than that. I took advantage of it to the fullest.

-Lil' Youngin, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're right! Nothing good comes out of rumors, so why do people start them? Well most of the time it's because the person who's starting them has major problems of their own so they like to embarrass others and make them feel inferior to them and other times it's because of jealousy. As long as we stay focused and ignore the negative things around us, we really have nothing to worry about. We were taught this lesson even as children with the parable, "Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me." It's really sad cause more and more of our youth are falling victim to the streets especially those that have grown up in and around drugs and crime. Do you think that eventually you'll find another trade else besides the game? Do you forgive your father for what he has done in the past? How do you deal with your guilty conscience? How can you make sure that your guilt doesn't eat you up inside? Thanks for answering all the questions honestly.

Waiting

Waiting for that good visit which
Makes me you feel so good inside
Can't wait
Pacing back and forth
Doing push-ups
Looking out my window every minute
Where is she? Where is she?
Damn, she told me
She was coming...
Calm down. Something came up
Don't worry
There still is time
She will be here soon,
So, I pace back and forth, looking out my door window,
then back out my room window
Still not here
Tears start to flow
My soul starts to burn
I thought mom loved me
(She never came)
Love,

-Domo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What a sad heartfelt piece about the visit that never happened. It's hard to have your hopes built up and then shot down. Do you know why your mom never came? Did you tell her how much she hurt you? Why don't you send her a copy of this poem so she can understand your pain and see how talented of a writer you are!?

Pieces Of the Week

Dear God, Jesus And The Virgin Mary

Dear God, Jesus and the Virgin Mary
Don't let me go to the Y, that's unnecessary
Just the thought of it is awfully scary
I've been in here since early January
My stay in here hasn't been merry
It's actually been quite the contrary
Thanks for helping me
in court back in February
But it seems the help was only temporary
The answer in my next court may vary
I hope I go home,
I feel that's what's necessary
God, I've chosen you as my supreme master
The only other person I'll praise is my pastor
You choose whether my day
will be good or a disaster
Days like those I wish would go by faster
God, I pray that you show me the light
Let me be able to see it, please make it bright
I wanna be better than this,
at a new level, new height
if I could do it soon it would be a delight
I'm in a battle, I feel like the Brown Knight
It's the supreme battle, the ultimate fight
I'm fighting for my life,
but hanging it there just slight
God, don't let them throw
my life into the night
I wanna be free,
I wanna feel the warm sunlight
And at night look up into the moonlight
I wanna go out and see real daylight
But everyday I feel like I'm losing my eyesight
Everyday, I wish me
and my family could reunite
God, that's all I'm asking for, is that all right?
God, listen to me, please help me out
It's a race for my life, don't let me drop out
Help me out,
don't let me be in the wrong crowd
Give me the strength not to go places where
I'm not allowed
Can you tell me why my life is as nice as a big
stormy cloud?
Tell me why it's like that and what's it about?
There are times in my life
that have made me proud
I know you'll give me more,
of that I have no doubt
When I feel you're not listening,
I just wanna pout
I wanna get wild and I wanna get loud
I wanna yell at you, and shout
That's an answer I can't be left without
My childhood was good
but then it got complicated
I kept getting in trouble so I kept getting
aggravated
I kept adding anger for years,
can you calculate it
When I got into trouble more often,
my anger accelerated
Some days I just got completely devastated
At points I'd even wish I'd be annihilated
God, help me change my life, help me rotate it
Lead me away from this bad life,
let me evacuate it
Let me destroy it, let me eradicate it
Show me the way, let me vacate it
God, help me quit getting incarcerated
'Cause every time I do, I get infuriated
I hate waitin' hella long just to get
interrogated
I hate answering their questions,
it makes me feel so manipulated
Every time I go through that, I get irritated
God, can't you see that I hate it,
I hate it, I hate it!
God, show me the problem,
help me locate it
So I can change this awful life
I've created
I wanna go to school and get educated
I wanna go to a good college and graduate it
Me and my bad life are like Siamese twins
— gotta get separated
I want the control I want to dominate it
I wanna steer my own fate, I wanna navigate it
I know most of y'all reading this can relate it
God keep me away from this life of sin
When I try a confession, there's so many I
don't know where to begin
But God, only you know how it's really been
This is my last shot;
don't let me come back again
Show me how to be good, give me some
discipline
Don't let all these trash talkers
get under my skin
I used to do weed to get some adrenaline
I wanted to grow up and be drug king pin
I wanted to sell weed,
crack, cocaine and heroin
Also acid, uppers, downers,
ether, extasy and mescaline
I did it 'cause I thought my only true friend
was Mr. Benjamin
It ended up leading me into a life I don't
wanna be in
I used to say I wanted to change I would've
gave up a limb
But it took me three years to find out real
change comes from within
God help me to always tell the truth
and not lie
Help me to be able to live to be old
and then die
Help me to accept and not deny
I wanna follow the rules and comply
God, I don't wanna go to the "Y"
I wanna get out before July
I know it's going to be hard God,
but let me get by
In times of sorrow,
I wanna hold my head up high
Instead of feeling self-pity and starting to cry
I wanna swim through a sea of sadness
and come out dry
When weighed down by the gravity of anger
I wanna fly
I wanna get away from it all
and soar through the sky
I wanna throw away the gun of sin before I
shoot myself in the eye
If it beckons me over I wanna walk away
without a reply
God, help me be good and not just try
Help me stand up for myself and not be shy
I don't wanna keep making excuses and
saying good-bye
'Cause I keep making alibi after alibi
I'm not really bad; I'm mostly a good guy
God, can you tell me the reasons for these
bad things, just tell me why?
God can you help me be able to recognize?
All the pains, troubles and problems out
there in disguise
Now I finally realize
That if I follow them,
it'll lead me to my demise
I don't wanna go down, I wanna rise
The system thinks all I'm good for
is to terrorize
But I'ma give them one big surprise
I'ma start to follow peoples' advice
I don't wanna bet my life
for the roll of the dice
I won't throw my life away,
that's something I despise
I wanna live to see the next sunrise
I wanna grow old and be wise
I know for life I'll have to pay a price
But I wanna pay it just precise
I don't wanna have to pay it twice
I want to be able to live my life
I wanna live it and make the experience nice
I want to get to heaven as my ultimate prize
God, grant me one wish,
just let me be free
Let me got out of here, just let me be me
Let me go to college and get a degree
Open my eyes and let me see
Me and you have been going at it,
so can't we agree
That keeping me locked up is not the key
I don't like this place, I wish I could flee
I wish I could be just another fish in the sea
I know by committing my crime,
I'd have to pay a fee
I'm paying it with years of my life, so far three
When I go to court I ask, I beg, and I plea
But me and the judge agree to disagree
God, just let me be free
Just let me get out and be who I wanna be
I don't want to stay in this trap
I can't go anywhere,
feels like I'm handicapped
My dream is to go to every place on the map
To travel around the world in big ol' Lac'
I hate this place
it makes me feel like a lab rat
Makes me feel so small
I could fit under a house mat
It's like I'm a baseball and this place is a bat
As soon as we make contact it's a wrap
I won't even know where I'll land at
That's why I say it's a trap
That's pretty much what I have to say
about that
Good-bye God, thanks for the chat.
Amen!

That piece is dedicated to anybody who reads it.

I hope you enjoyed it because that is my last piece that I write to The Beat. I might decide to write again but for now my heart is not into it no more, but I would like to encourage everybody to keep writing. I would like to give out props to everybody who writes to The Beat, especially those who make it to the Pieces of the Week and also to the Co-Pieces of the Week. Also much props to Pastor J-Wizzle, Tishay, Tyresha, Fireball, Lil' Mamma Hannah, Lil' Kev, and a lot of others for always putting it down for the 150 Crew. This might not be my last piece I ever write to The Beat, but I just can't put my heart into it now. I hope it's only a temporary thing. I'm still going to be here for a while so I hope more people step up and write from their hearts, not just to impress, and I don't just mean from 150 but from every other county that has Beat.

And if Michael Orozco is reading this all I can tell you is to keep on drawing man, you have some serious talent. I don't know when you get out, but whenever you do go out there — get paid for it or something. Being in prison is just wasting those talents — the same goes for everybody else. You all have some talent. All you gotta do is find out what it is and use it to your advantage, if you keep coming to places like these you'll just be wasting it all away. So until this emperor gets his groove back — peace out!

-Toni, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thanks for always keeping it real and playing a big part in our Beat workshops Toni. It's a pleasure knowing you and having you write for us. We believe that you've strengthened our pages of The Beat Within and strengthened yourself at the same time. As fo your piece does praying to God help you get through your time while you're locked up? Do you follow all or any of God's teachings? Do you feel stronger having God as a part of your life? Now, have you heard that saying, "God helps those who help themselves"? How can you help yourself stay focused on what you want from life? How can you make sure that you don't waste away your talent? 'Cause your talent is seeping through the pages! We're sure in due time you'll find your writing groove, till then... Write on.

Woke Up

Man, yo, I done woke up to smell the coffee 'cause being locked up for hella long, like a year and a few months, so being away from the people that I love ain't no joke.

Like on every day I got to wake up at 6:00 am for shower program. But I'm so used to it by now, that by the time staff come to me talking 'bout, "Rise and shine. It's shower time," I'm already up.

So when I do get out, I'm about to follow up on some dreams, and leave the stupid shhh alone. I would try my best to get younger kids away from this beef. But if they (kids) don't listen, I got to try to be persistent.

It's not only set in my mind, but it's my heart as well. Just like I got to make up time to spend wit' my daughter so that I can show her that turf bangin' ain't the way to go. There's a much better world, better than the one that she has already been exposed to.

I can't tell her nothing to do about her womanhood. That's up to her momma to do. So that's just how a father should do, I know some females that don't have daddies and they just runnin' wild, don't even know how to handle they self, and do all that other shhh. That's why I had to say that I woke up to smell the coffee, 'cause I'm missin' out. But I'm about to roll out. 'Til next time I hit back, be easy!

-Cudabeez B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This piece is a home run, Cudabeez. That coffee you're smelling is the promise of a decent life for your daughter, the chance of a life in freedom for you, and the hope of steering youngsters in a positive direction for many. You've got it in you to accomplish all of this, and more — and we're pulling for you to do it!

Sad Angel / Broken Tear

it is okay to cry let the pain grow
we can overcome it
you was so pure until it was your time to go
how you left it was pain
but where you rest there is peace
it's because you're special
also 'cause i got love for you
when we used to talk
no one could get in the way
i also remember
every word you used to say
let the calm breeze wash over your grave
where the birds fly as free as they used to be
and the clouds like thought did
just to let the clean air feel not so clear again
that will never make my thoughts of you clear again
that i'll never overcome the pain
the pain letting it overwhelm us
and all that's left is your purity and your love
to let the world know you was wonderful
to engrave it in your tombstone
who you are and let it stay there
till death does it part
until then rest in peace chris
rest in peace chris

-Joycee, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This sad and beautiful lyric floats down the page as the clouds you describe float across the sky, and we feel something of the tender and deep sadness you feel inside, overwhelmed by the grief of your loss. Thank you for the beautiful poetry in memory of Chris, RIP.

Freedom

Freedom is really a faulty paradise. I really wouldn't want to live my life again for a lot of reasons, one being that I'm gaining a lot of knowledge being incarcerated. I also feel stronger then I did on the outs, not in a physical way but in a mental way.

I'm ready for life's challenges. I always believe you have to answer to God no matter if you're locked up or free. I'm hoping everything will be fine when I get out, but I still know I have a lot to accomplish whenever I get out.

I really don't know anyone who's been locked up a really long time, but I've heard stories before like how the world changed and they didn't even know about it. Some people even freaked out when they saw how much it has changed since they were locked up.

Finally, freedom also comes with a lot of responsibilities, and some people can't accept those responsibilities.

-Abbas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Many people believe that being locked up is a totally negative experience, a waste of time, but as you so keenly observe, many positive things can occur while incarcerated. It can slow down our fast-paced lives and give us time to think. It can give us a chance to change for the better so that when we're on the outs we don't encounter the same problems — or, when we do encounter them, we are better prepared to deal with them. Keep your head up and stay focused. You are maturing before our eyes, and turning into a teacher.

I'm preparing for my freedom by not going back to the community I was raised in. No, it wasn't a hard decision. Why? 'Cause I want to live!

Freedom

What's hard for me when I get my freedom is staying alive. There's too many people out there killing each other for something that's not theirs — turf.

I'm preparing for my freedom by not going back to the community I was raised in. No, it wasn't a hard decision. Why? 'Cause I want to live!

Once upon a time, just last year, I had that "game" mentality and the way I was going I was hurting people, not mentally but physically and verbally disrespecting others. I was looking at many years locked up.

Then I realized that I wasn't the person other people said I was. So I began to take my life serious, letting things go, not holding grudges. That was my main problem — holding grudges, having an anger problem. I just wanted to let it go.

I'm working on this one day at a time with the help of the lord, The Beat Within, and my lawyer, Todd Beford. Thanks.

-Ray, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We appreciate being put in the same list of helpful folks as the lord and your lawyer! If The Beat helped you reach the level of maturity you demonstrate in this piece, then were very grateful. But it's more likely that your own self-examination and thinking led you to a new way of looking at the world, and one that promises you a much greater chance of fulfillment and happiness (though there are no guarantees in life) than the path you've been on. Do you have a plan to get you past those difficult times when things seem overwhelming and you're tempted to fall back into old habits?

Pieces Of the Week

It's The Law Rap

You can learn about the state of the USA
by the laws we have on the books today.
The rules we break, all the laws we make,
the things we fear, we legislate.
We got laws designed to keep folks in line,
laws for what happens when you lose your mind,
laws against stealing,
laws against feelings.
The laws we have are a definite sign
that our vision love is going blind.
They probably got a law against this rhyme.
Oya
We got laws for cool cats and laws for dirty dogs,
laws about where you can park your dog
Hell yeah
Laws against your mamas and papas, too.
Even got a law to make the laws come true.
It's against the law to hurt an old lady,
It's against the law to steal a little baby.
The laws we make are what we do to each other.
There are no laws to make brothers love brothers.
Hell no
Now this respect thing is hard for some folks to do.
They don't respect themselves so they can't respect you.
This is the word we should get around these are the rules we
gonna run 'em on down.
Listen up!
It isn't enough to be cute; it isn't enough to be tough.
You got to walk tall, you got to strut your stuff.
You got to learn to read you, got to learn to write.
Get the tools you need to win this fight.
Get your common sense down off the shelf.
Starts, in the mirror, respect your self!
When you respect yourself, you keep your body clean.
You walk tall, walk gentle, don't have to be mean.
You keep your mind well fed, you keep a clear head
and you think about whom you let in your bed.
When you respect yourself you come to understand,
that your body is a temple for a natural plan.
It's against that plan to use drugs or dope.
Use your heart and your mind when you need to cope…
It's the law! We got laws that got started in '86,and laws made
back when the Black got kicked.
If we want these laws to go out of favor,
then we've got to change our behavior.
Change what, you say? Well let's take a look,
how did the law get in the books?
Yeah
I said it up front, but let's get tougher.
The laws we make are what we do to each other.
If you never shoot at me
then I don't need a law to keep you from shooting at me,
do you see?
There's a universal law that's tried and true:
What you don't want done to you.
Uhh-huhh!
Don't do
to me
What you don't want done to you.
It's the law!

-Peaches, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a terrific poem, Peaches! Very tight. Yes, it does seem we have laws for everything, even though if we followed the one law you lay out — "what you don't want done to you don't do to" — we'd have no need for any other laws at all. Just practice what you preach, and we hope it'll help you stay out of these institutions!

Missing My Brother

To my brother, I love you and wish you were still here.

Ay, Brah, I wish I had secret to bring you back. If I did, you be alive right now livin' phat.

I sit here an' think about the days we chilled. My first car wreck on the block when the lil' homie ran in the wall, tryin' to swing it to make the fat man laugh, ha. That stuff was funny. When we hit that wall the seat belt snapped tight on my stomach so fast I couldn't think about breathing.

Then here you come yellin', "5-0, 5-0!" Shhh! That snapped me back to life. I got out that car an' ran fo' my life, ha ha. Later that day you was on my line putting me on about rollin' in stolens with flowers. Ya told me ninjas don't really care about ya, an' they use you as they stunt dummy if you let 'em.

Brah, I already knew it, but when you told me after I could've just died in the wreck, I swore to myself to never move out with a follower. Always have a purpose when I move out. That's worth something.

Do you remember all of the football games, hoop games, money, parties, girls, slap boxing, joking around, girls, whippin' on the haters…

Shhh, Brah, Ninja you is the only homie that got a different girl fo' ever outfit, and everybody know ya stayed fitted to the T.

I remember when I used to go to practice at King Park. You was out there doing ya thang. Ya had my lil' homie saying, "I wanna be like Mike." Ha, ha. Brah, I wanna tell you thanks for watching out for me, thanks for never letting me leak, thanks for evening the score whenever they were stacked against me, thanks for forcing me to go to school (you know I wouldn't of gone if you wouldn't put me out there), thanks for being around.

Bruh, I know that you watching over me and everybody else. I want to thank you covering me from tha rain. God knows it don't feel good to get wet. I love you, and I'm always gone hold you down Dang, Brah, you don't know how much I miss you. I love you and everybody miss you. I wish you was here. I love you. RIP Big Bruh "Jo," I retire yo' number fo' life.

Ya lil' bruh,

-Pg B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It is very sad to read that you lost your big brother so early in life, PG. Your love for him is very powerful. What else did he teach you "that's worth something?" If he were able to talk to you right now, what would he say? Of course, he lives in

Fire — Dedicated To My Mom

I'm on fire.
You can't believe.
I can't see what's ahead of me.
Can't you see I'm going crazy?
Everything is on fire to me,
because my life is spinning in circles.
I need someone to hold me.
I wish you were here for me, because my heart is dying.
I'm running out of time.
Hurry up and come to me.
My heart is breaking.
My heart is dying.
I wish you were here for me.
I need love from everything.
I wish you were here for me.
The love in my heart is dying.
I wish for many things, but most of all…
I wish for you,
because I love you
because I need you.
I wish I could hold you in my arms again
and see you through heaven's eyes and with my heart
through this world of sorrow
and be with you till tomorrow.

-Jason, Marin

From The Beat: We can feel through your beautiful tribute to your mom how you ache for her and miss her, Jason. We hope she somehow feels what you must be suffering without her, and that she finds her way back to you!

Don't Judge A Person Upon Appearance

Hi, my name is Johnny. I am going to be eighteen on June twentieth. That's Father's Day this year, as it has always been around this time of the year for most of the eighteen years of my life on this horrible planet called "Earth".

I am Goth. For those of you who don't know what that is, it is a person who is an independent person with deep feelings, and believes in only the negative things that life has to offer. A Goth is also very artistic in many ways and are those people you might see walking down the streets wearing black, looking dead. I do not believe in God or in the devil, but I do believe in heaven and hell. I am a very spiritual person.

I have had forty three piercings — forty one of which I did myself: two tongue, one septum, two nostril, five bottom lip, three top lip, four eyebrows, two bridge of nose, fifteen on both ears put together, six in each nipple, and two between the webbings of my thumb and pointer.

I plan on doing piercing as my profession. I have done a lot of drugs: Pot, meth, cocaine, DXM, acid, extasy, Peyote, Vicoden, and Codeine. I like to play hacky sack and skateboard.

People have judged me all my life for how I look and always put me down. But there are a lot of people in Juvy that judged me by my looks but after they talked to me for a while, they found out that I am a "beast," as rappers put it, but I do know this: Just because you think a person looks like a "square", it doesn't mean that he is.

-Shadow-Caos, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Being judgmental is a characteristic that has made us, as human beings, very limited to the things the world has to offer to us such as meeting new people and even going to new places. Most people fail to realize that our uniqueness is what makes us individuals, so anything that's different from what we're use to we frown upon instead of trying to understand. It is very brave of you to be yourself in the midst of such a cruel and shallow society; we need more people like you who aren't afraid to be leaders.

I Remember

I remember seein' my patna die in front of my face with my own two eyes. I couldn't run, I couldn't scream. All I could do was hear those shots, not even noticin' the van creepin' up the street, smokin' purple, and high off a number of E's. Shots rang when they hit him.

I felt the pain. I started to run, but my muscles were restrained. Eyes twitchin', sayin' don't let me die. I got hit nine times, lost a lung, and almost survived. Now, when I sleep, I see the night you and me and my other patnas were kickin' it and you got hit by them suckas. That was out of fear that he died. Only 18 and had one kid, but they say, "Live by the gun, die by the gun," but when I saw that blood oozin', and my heart was bruised. It's been six months and I still rep you bro'.

When I walk down the street where you got hit, I can still see the blood; it cannot be removed. Even though you're gone, but never forgotten Anty Bo aka Anthony. We all miss you, but if the good die young, what happens to the bad? I also experienced my own image, but I didn't imagine it happening. It became real in a blink of an eye.

Me and my patnas were kickin' it at this park goin' dumb. We were ridin' around on our way to the function. Ninjas started arguin', so we were like, "Man, what's up? Man, what is y'all sayin'? Ain't no talkin'?" They cut. We went outside and got in the car. We got one thump and it's mine, so the same ninjas started chasin' us. We scraped off. They started shootin'. We hit the corner and this car was comin'. I jerked the wheel and got into a parked car. I loosened the wheel and bapped into a big wall on the side of a factory. My patna didn't have on his seat belt and went through the window but lived.

-Lil' Youngin, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a terrible and horrifying experience to have to go through. After going through this, how do you protect yourself? Have you gone to see a therapist or talked to anyone about this? Do you value your life more after this experience? How can you save yourself from a similar tragedy? Do you believe that if you live by the gun — then you die by the gun? If so, then how do you live your life?

If Tomorrow Comes

Blood, sweat, and tears over the years, but if I leave tonight, do I know if I put up a good fight? If I could do it over again, there will be no more hustlin' in them streets 'cause the pain it's brung upon me, so much hate and misery throughout the streets.

Survival or defeat, I wanna see the look on my enemy's face when I come strong with a punch that won't be physical. If tomorrow comes, I now know whom my enemy is. I've seen footsteps throughout my life, but I never peeped. Every night before I go to sleep, I never think until I come to the conclusion for a number one. Someone that loves you, wouldn't hurt you and bring pain upon you or your family.

If tomorrow comes, I am ready for the struggle. I know how to deal with the streets, but the struggle of life. If tomorrow comes, will people I love and need, deceive me, and leave me? Will I still cherish the best and regret the worst? For it brought game and also left me behind, hurt. When the wind blows, will I just give up and let it go and just say I've been through enough.

What if tomorrow doesn't come and I'm stuck in a deep sleep? I can't see the twinkle in the sky, nor stand on my feet. If I die because of the life I lived, will I get past those gates and be more than bait? Will I see my dead patnas? Will we rejoice even though we hear that voice, but if tomorrow comes, I'll be the first one to throw away my guns, drugs, and that state of mind 'cause now it's closed like a casket and dead like the body inside of it, if tomorrow comes...

-Lil' Youngin, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If tomorrow comes, how can you make it a better day? If tomorrow comes, why not start living the right way? If tomorrow comes, will you let your talent waste away? If tomorrow comes, will you say what you didn't say yesterday? If tomorrow comes, will you start to pray? If tomorrow comes, what will you let stand in your way?

if tomorrow comes, I'll be the first one to throw away my guns, drugs, and that state of mind 'cause now it's closed like a casket and dead like the body inside of it, if tomorrow comes...

Co-Pieces Of the Week

Paradise Or Not

I can say that freedom is something that we all like, but I can't say that the outside is paradise. Of course you out there free and don't have to follow a staff members orders, but at the same time, a person who's locked up does not have to worry about selling drugs or getting drunk every night, etc. You don't have to worry about getting busted by the police for some stupid crime that you might do, or end up getting popped.

In a way it's good that we're in. We don't have to worry about any of the things I just said. But I can't say that this paradise either, especially when a person go to court. We have to go through them. They always talking about "how bad" we are, and how we "do not deserve a second chance," and how we should go to the CYA.

I'll tell you like this: there's no paradise in or out. Paradise comes from the inside. That's what I think.

-Noriega B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: In addition to the things you mentioned, there are other, everyday things that make "freedom" less than paradise: having to work, relationship stresses, paying for car insurance, etc. What we like most about this piece is your conclusion. We would love to read more about just what you mean. How do you find paradise within you? If paradise is inside, is hell also there? Can both exist within us at the same time?

A Short Story Of What Counts

Can you imagine telling your child the rules of life? Where would you begin? How would you end it? Your son looks just like you and talks just like you. How would you make sure that he does not go through what you went through? Your baby girl looks like your wife, and you hold her tight wishing she'd never grow up because of the demons that would want her.

Now that you have lived and learned, you know right from wrong. Not saying that you cannot make another mistake, it's just, why, when you know.

Life! How can you tell someone about life? It's full of things you want and can't have, stories of people who make it and dreams that are hard to reach. You grow up falling on your knees, watching thugs run tha streets, making your own moves and finding yourself dealing with the outcome.

You say to yourself, "How can I make my life a story to tell?" you don't want to tell a story that makes you look like a failure, you want to be a champion. Of course, everyone does, although when someone wins, someone loses. So now it's time to draw your blueprint of your life. How can you make sure that you live life right? Avoid the fast life, it will pass you by. Count on it.

Some just live life doing the same thing as before. Some live and move on to start brand new. That's like running away and pretending it never happened. Sometimes it's good. Some really want the best and work at their bet to earn the best. Others view the best as hard-working people that deserve every penny they earn. Still having hate in them, they try to bring them down. That's why they are the some that live life doing the same thing as before.

Do you have the courage to stand up to life and say, "I will conquer you and make you give me the best"? Do you have the strength to fall and try again without taking a step down? When becoming an adult things feel different, but that's only if you make different moves.

Can you honestly say that you have a goal in life that you will reach? Are you by yourself, or are you with a trustworthy person that you call your own? Stop wishing but sill keep praying, and start to say, "Okay, I want it, so how can I get it without selling my soul?" That's the catch. You can get the finer things, but that means losing your soul.

Count your blessings, and count on yourself to make life like in your dreams.

-Cecil B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We've waited a long time for a piece like this from you, Cec. There is so much experience and knowledge in this piece, it would be a tragedy if your readers applied your wisdom to themselves, but you failed to apply it to yourself. Feel us?

Can you honestly say that you have a goal in life that you will reach?

The Thing I Miss the Most

i miss my mom
i miss the way she used to yell at me
even though i did bad
i miss the way she cooked
that's the thing i miss the most
i also miss the way she used to wash my clothes
the way she used to make them smell
i miss her smile
the way she dressed
i miss looking at her cleaning the house
the way she made people feel dumb
when people would tried to make her feel dumb
the thing i miss the most
is living at home with my mom

-Luis, 150 Crew

From The Beat: At first it sounds like you just miss what your mom does for you, but then, as you continue, we get the whole picture of a smart, hardworking, loving and caring mom who shows she cares in many everyday ways. Beautiful little poem!

he thing i miss the most is living at home with my mom

Why Cry

why cry
you chose
to believe a lie
why cry
you wanted
this life
why cry
try to fight
why hide
the feelings
i can see the water
in your eyes
fake people i despise
why hate
because of fate
livin' life
on mistakes
you get what
you take
and receive
what you believe
why cry
because more die
you choose to live a life
of crime
why try
if you're
just gon' quit
stop the bullshhh
are you listening
to the words that i spit
knowledge game and wisdom
all in one
the pain hate and rage
inside me
weighs a ton
why cry
when in time
we all are done
live life now
die while having fun
live life fast
die young
lyrics sharper than
razor blades
so every time i spit
they cut my gums
metaphors dropping
hotter than slugs
why cry
to hide a mug
well when all is gone
and no shoulder left
who will be the one
to cry on

-Ben, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sometimes you write like the Spirit of Love is divine, and other times, living by the gun and dying young, seems to you just fine — like "having fun"! You know that's a lie, just the devil inside seizing you by the throat to make you laugh like a joke. Why cry? Tears purify! Surrender to hate; it becomes your fate. No one to cry on? From the bottom real change is begun.

Some Habits I Have

Well, most of my habits are not good ones. I have so many bad habits I can't even remember not one of them. I can remember a few of the worst bad habits that I have and one is coming back and forth to jail. I have been in the cell about seven or eight times and each time I say the same thing — that I will never come back to this place ever again, and every time I come back so that's why I call it a habit.

Another one of my bad habits is smoking weed. I know that it's not good, but I still do it anyway. I guess when something bad happens with my health then I will learn that I need to stop smoking, but it kills me to know that I am doing something to put my health at risk and I know it but I choose to keep doing it.

Another bad habit is not going to school, I know that it's there to help, but I still won't go the reason for that sometimes I feel that school is a total waste of time, but it's not. In order to get a good job you have to have an education if you don't, you will end up somewhere you don't want to be

-Tony, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Solid writing on topic. What type of grades did you receive in school? Did you try your hardest when you were attending? The better you do in school the more you will enjoy it. As you already know, it will pay off in the long run so does that motivate you to want to start taking it seriously? Smoking weed becomes a problem when you smoke too much. Think about it!

If the kids in the streets saw their lives are leading to nowhere, financially, and everything, then maybe they would aim for college

Taking Everything For Granted

We all want to get out and start our lives all over again, but we've come to realize that many of us come to imagine freedom as paradise. Being in jail for a long time causes this to happen to a lot of us.

Some of us do not realize that when we are not incarcerated, we take our freedom for granted. For example — family. A lot of teenagers take their family for granted. They do not understand how much family members care for them. A family member could easily make you pay rent, and if you don't, kick you out onto the streets.

Then, also involving freedom, you can take advantage of the streets. I do not know how, or have, an example. I'm not even sure if taking "the streets" for granted is possible, but it sure seems like it being locked up.

When you're locked up, all you can do is think about what you are going to do when you get out. Some people want to continue running the streets. Some won't change their lives and quit their bad habits, be someone successful. That's how most people should be. If the kids in the streets saw their lives are leading to nowhere, financially, and everything, then maybe they would aim for college, and aim for the big bucks 'cause that's where the real money is at.

-Carl, 150 Crew

From The Beat: At some point in our lives, we all often take something or someone for granted and that always leads to great loss. We all have to appreciate what we have because if it's good — like freedom and family then it's a privilege. Not many people are blessed with such beautiful things. When you are released, how can you show more appreciation to those wonderful people and things?

Standouts

Thinking

I woke up this morning and looked out of my window. As I sat there and said to myself, why did you do what you did? I just want to go home, I tell myself.

I always feel bad for myself when I know I only have 12 days to go. That's not long. It just seems when I'm sitting up in my room I think about what's passing me by there's lots of things passing me by. But I know when I get out things will be the same at home. My family will still be there and still love me. That's all I care about is my family still loving me.

So next time you're going to do something to get you locked up, think about your family and what they mean to you.

-Barbara, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: Did you ever tell yourself that advice? We hope you and your family will have a happy reunion. What kind of impact does you're incarceration have on your family? Can your family help you stay out? How?

Alone

I'm sitting on my bed
Tryna think
Every time I look out
My heart just sinks
Being in the Hall sucks
It's all on me
Sometimes I go crazy
I just want to leave
I'm all alone
Just on my bed
Outs is all I'm thinkin' 'bout
I can't get it outta my head
I betrayed my family
My friends are gone
In the cage
All alone...

-Sarah, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: It's hard to think before you do the things that get you locked up, but it's so necessary. Is it possible to train yourself to consider the options before doing the action? How can you gain your family's trust back? Will it take time?

One Day

I remember one time me and my homies were just chillin' at the Templeton Park, then all of the sudden, some more of our homies came.

Usually we're really buzzin'. But this day was different. I was surprised. We all decided to play football. People were jumpin' off the table tackling each other, then after five minutes we were all out of breath. Stinkin' smokers, one of my homies said. Couple of them said they were going to quit smokin' weed. We all laughed at them.

Then all of the sudden, I woke up...I was at JSC. I wish I stopped smokin' weed just like they did in my dream.

-Julia, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: What's stopping you? Sounds like you can have a good time without weed, and you wouldn't get locked up for it? Can you make the change? Why/why not?

September 11

Alright, at first when the planes crashed into the twin towers on September 11 everyone was all shocked. Then we automatically blamed it on Afghanistan. Not just the terrorists who attacked us.

Then all people that were Iraqis got stereotyped and different things started happening. Soon, since we couldn't find who we wanted, or what we wanted, we moved our troops into Iraq. This was unnecessary.

Now, this whole thing is so out of control. I really don't know what to say. I mean innocent people are getting sodomized and humiliated. This whole thing is crazy!

-Tatum, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: War is ugly business. Innocent people die and that is wrong. From what you know about the terrorist attacks and the wars that followed, what would you have done different? Would you have

To Understanding

Every time I come to JSC it sucks. It's not like anyone likes to come in here or anything. When you go to court you just sit there while other people are deciding your life without getting your input.

So, once you get your sentence they expect you to be fine. Something I think is funny is when they just give you another court date so you're sittin' around for another month. You're seeing your friends come in and out and it breaks your heart.

Understanding is not something the JSO's know how to do. You hit your walls to feel better then you get sprayed. You think gettin' sprayed won't hurt that bad and it'll be a small can. Then they take out a fire extinguisher looking thing and hose you down. They give you more pain than you need. They just don't understand.

-Julia, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: We're sorry you had to go through that painful, humiliating experience. We hope you don't have to go through that again. Can you de-stress/release your anger in other ways that won't get you sprayed? Writing? Drawing? Deep breathing? Talking to a roommate or friend? And what about the rest of your time — the system determines so much of your life now, so what can you keep for yourself, and how can you improve that part, so that the system doesn't get the better of you?

Listening

The only person that would listen to me was my best friend Tunisha. She would always listen she would tell me what she thought but she never made me feel bad about it no matter what it was.

We used to talk about boys, drugs, all the shhh. She's a good friend, sister and listener. I can still go to her and talk about what's on my mind.

-Nettey Bo GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You're lucky to have such a close friend. Where is she now? What would she tell you about your situation, and about what you need to do to change it?

We used to talk about boys, drugs, all the shhh.

Listen Up

What up Beat? You know I'm lucky to have many people to listen to me. Well the one that I always depend on is my mother. She would listen to me any time. She tells me what's up and I'm thankful that I tell her, or that I could tell her what's up.

There's two other people that I could talk to and they listen to me. That's my girlfriend and my close homie, Lil' Cut. You know we been through hella shhh, did big things. We both settled down for a minute, but you know you can't keep a good man down. I started doing shhh. That's why I'm here. But as for him, he's still doing cool. But we forever boys. He still listens.

Well, as for my girl, of course she listens to me. If not, why would I be with her? We cool; we tight; we go together like a throw back jersey with a hat. It's all good.

-Slick B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You're lucky to have several people in your life that you feel comfortable confiding in. Can you tell your girl all the things that you tell Lil' Cut? Why do you think he's still doing good while you're here? What would he tell you about whatever it is that brought you here? Do you also listen to your girl? Can she tell you anything? What does your mom want most for you? How can you give it to her?

Freedom

My freedom could be a faulty paradise 'cause I know that when I am out there I be doing a whole lot of stuff. I would really be of the hook drinking, partying, going home after midnight.

I really wasn't going to school, but deep inside, I really wanted to stop all the bad habits. But it just seemed too hard to quit.

To keep it real, I have a problem with

my drinking. To me it's really hard to admit, but in order to change, I have to admit where I am wrong.

Being in here has made me realize so much stuff it ain't even funny. This time I see life in a different perspective, and really that feels good. So this time

I am ready to live life to the fullest.

-Estrella GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: The fact that you can state openly that you have a drinking problem is the first step towards conquering that problem. It isn't enough, of course, but without acknowledging you have the problem, there is no solution. We really admire your upbeat, positive outlook. We believe people can bring about their own fate by how they approach life, and your approach should bring you good things. Living life to the fullest, of course, doesn't guarantee that everything will come up roses, so how will you deal with the inevitable disappointments and frustrations that all of us face?

No Trust To Talk

I think that if I had someone to just really sit down and listen, I would express how I feel about what I went through in my childhood. But I can't trust no one. And besides, don't no one seem to wanna listen when you want to talk to someone about how you're feeling.

If you can't find anybody that wants to listen, you will eventually do something stupid like fight or whatever. Then people want to be all in ya face asking why did you guys fight, or who threw the first punch.

No matter what happens, at least you tried to talk to someone before everything went down. That's why I can't trust no one, 'cause all they gone do is point the finger at you. But there are some people out there who are willing to listen to you about whatever you want to talk about. So when the opportunity comes around I'm gone talk advantage of it.

-Zoomungus B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We find it so sad that you recognize the value and need to talk about your childhood and your life, but you don't trust anyone to talk to. Would you trust a disinterested professional (like a psychologist, counselor, teacher)? Who are those people you say are out there willing to listen, and why haven't you talked to them before? Is there anything you could tell The Beat without fear of consequences? (If you wanted to write something and tell us not to publish it, we would respect that.)

As My Thoughts Drift

Drifting, drifting, drifting, drifting
Drifting aloft like clouds in the sky
It's a particularly swarthy night in my mind
So I let my thoughts drift slowly
Knowing not of where they are going
I could be anywhere, but I'm still in my mind
Even in class my conscience lifts
And I go quiet as my thoughts drift

-Starr B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This poem lulls us into a calm and quiet state. We love the alliteration. If you did not know where your thoughts were going in the beginning, can you tell us where they took you in the end?

don't no one seem to wanna listen when you want to talk to someone about how you're feeling.

Freedom Is Difficult

Freedom is more difficult then being incarcerated, because on the outs you have to feed, clothe, and shelter yourself. In here all of the things are paradise for you.

Change is a constant thing on the outside world and you constantly have to adjust yourself to it. When you are locked up, things pretty much stay the same.

-L B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We agree, and we think one of the worst things about locking people up for long periods of time is that adjusting to change and the lack of predictability in everyday life is very hard. All the things you learn to survive as a prisoner you have to unlearn as a free person. But at least you recognize what you're facing, so you will be better prepared to handle it.

What They Said

They said I was a nobody
They said I would never be anybody
They said I was never going to succeed
They said I was a failure
They said I was going to end up dead
They said the life I was living only had two choices
Guess which one caught up with me?

-Stagalee B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Short, but powerful! When "they" said all these things, what were you saying to yourself? How much of what "they" said seeped into your head and soul so that you became the person "they" said you would be? They were right about one thing, Stagalee, you will end up dead, because will all end up dead. The only question is how we fill the time while we're waiting... If you reverse each thing "they" said about you, make it the opposite, then we believe you'll see what we know for sure, which is that you have more than two choices, whatever "they" said.

Standouts

Apology

I owe my momma and ex-boyfriend an apology for my stubbornness. I always thought I was on top. I could play or do anything as long as nobody else found out. Well, when momma found out things got really bad.

I remember coming home twacked out, leaving ten minutes later with a black eye. I met my ex in Santa Maria and chose some other guy. Then I ran into him in SLO JSC, we hooked up but of course I was on top of the world and knew everything.

Well, I was wrong, and I'm more sorry than words can say.

-Desiree, San Luis Obispo

From The Beat: How can you check yourself before you wreck yourself next time? It's easy to get carried away in the good times, and bad times, and become a drama mama. So, how do you keep in check, so your decisions aren't so loca? Take time for yourself to think? Breathe? Slow down? What works for you?

Slipping

It feels like my life is slipping away from me. It feels like I have no more control. The reason: I gave me life to the streets.

Now, whatever the streets feel like doing to my, it's going to happen. I put myself out there and let my name get caught in the wrong sentences, and the streets, they don't forgive or forget nobody.

But me, I'ma be forgotten. I'ma get out of all this madness, relocate and change my whole life around. It's possible.

-Stagalee B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Yes, yes, yes, it's possible! Your piece starts so hopelessly and ends so hopefully! If you set your mind on that change you want to bring about and take one step at a time to get there (steps that you have planned for and expect), it is more than possible. We're behind you all the way.

Planning (Or Plotting?) The Future

Things getting uglier on the outside of these walls as well as the inside of them.

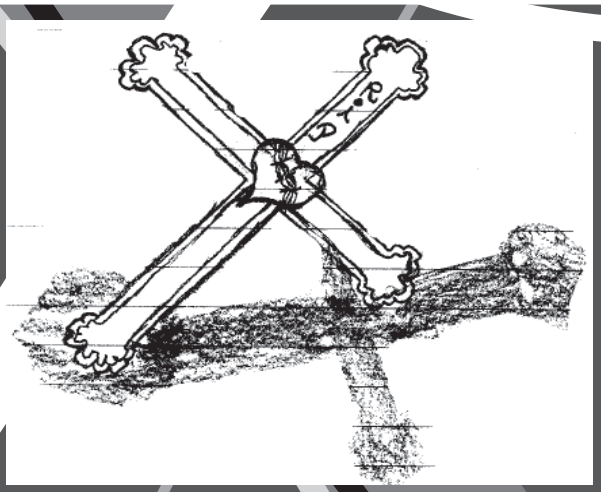
What's going on, on the inside, is really nothing compared to what's going on in the streets. It's still something, though. Young thugs are behind these walls thinking about what they going to do when they get out. You going to run into some people locked up who want to get out and do right, such as going to college or looking after they little ones that they made when they were out.

Everything got two sides to it though. Just like you got the people who want to get out and do right, you got the ones in they room thinking and planning how to do things, but this time not getting caught doing it. That's the ones that ain't getting nothing from being down. The time just making it possible for them to get a game plan for the life on the streets as a thug.

That's what a lot of people locked up are doing, but you do got some who want to change their lives.

-Leek B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: In which group do you put yourself, Leek? Of those who are plotting their thug lives, how many do you think will come back to YGC, go to the Y or the pen, or end up dead or paralyzed? What do you see for yourself when you are able to make all your own choices again?



Slow Down

To keep it real, I don't think you ready to go to the pen.
I don't think you ready to sleep with nothing but men.
You lil' boys better say in yo' place.
You lil' boys ain't gotta be scared 'til you catch you a case
You lil' boys need to slow down because the halls come to an end
And the pen is coming up next, Kid

-Lil' Dakota B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Every piece of advice in this tight little poem is right on the money. Of course, we hope you include yourself in the "lil' boys" category, because you couldn't do any better than following your own advice.

I Do and I Don't

I have somebody who listens to me, but then again — I don't. I know that sounds funny, so let me explain.

My mother doesn't really listen to anybody. My sister doesn't take me seriously. My little brother doesn't understand. And I'm not allowed to be with my real, big brother, because our moms don't get along.

My grandmother always takes my mom's side. My uncle always listened to me, but he passed away. And my friends be acting fake, ya feel me. Even though I live with these conditions … *to be continued.*

-Brandon, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It sounds like you have plenty of people to talk to, but no one who can listen to you sympathetically, understand where you're coming from, and then offer you heartfelt advice. Can't wait to read part two!

Just like you got the people who want to get out and do right, you got the ones in they room thinking and planning how to do things, but this time not getting caught doing it.

Different Pictures

Stressing and depression
No one ever listens to my confessions
Locked up at The Ranch my feelings was hurt
Guess karma came back after all those times I did dirt
Now I'm going in and out for court
Trying my best to get a good report
Looking at mother is like a waterfall of tearstains
Feeling so much hate and anger inside that I contain
Wishing I could cry a storming rain
To soak everybody and feel my pain
And to my so-called friends
Where are you when I'm stuck at this end?
Where are all the letters you said you would send?
I guess you wasn't the ones I should depend on
Y'all is the reason I'm not at home
Having me sit in Log Cabin Ranch talking to baby girl on the phone
Thanks to her I'm filled with comfort and not left all alone

-Noel B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Do you know the reasons behind the hate and anger you carry with you? Why do you want everybody else to feel it? We feel you on feeling abandoned by your peoples, and we even understand how you blame them for you being there? But who picked your "so-called friends?" In other words, aren't you leaving someone out when you lay responsibility entirely on others?

The Game

The game is real
The game is fake
The game is nasty
The game is great
The game is less
The game is weight
The game is whatever you want it to make
But you have to take and take to make and make
The game is the same however you maintain
So stay safe, and beware of the game

-Man B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: How can you make the game whatever you want it to be? Does "the game" have rules? What happens if you break them? If "the game is great," then why do you have to warn people to "beware" of it? What is fake about the game? What is great?

My Homeboy

I've got a homeboy that I've known since the first grade. Me and him is real tight!

Whenever he is havin' a hard time, or just wants to chop it up about something that's happening or he thinks is going to happen — he comes to me. And I do the same thing with him.

We steady kickin' it on the block with each other. On the block, we have hella females, and we watch each other's back twenty-four/seven.

When I'm locked up, he checks on my moms to see if she needs anything. He makes sure my whole family got whatever he can give. I do the same thing when he's down.

Whether I'm out or not out, I have somebody I know can handle it. Well, to cut this short — we really tight and got each other's back to the fullest extent!

On the real though, homeboys and homegirls, don't stress off the little stuff. We'll get out and be able to handle our business on the streets.

-Crazy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We feel the bond between two friends that extends from the block to lock up and back. So when you finish ROP, and get a job that takes you off the street — be there for your friend then. But the way you express your friendship need to change. It won't be just about the block or checking on Moms when the other's locked up;'cause the master plan is you won't be locked up ever again! If the two of you are like you describe, he'll be there to support you in a legitimate life. And vice versa.

My Life Or Death

my life
my occupation
it's death
that's what I'm facin'
hustlin' in my situation
and my heart stays racin'
one day we'll all be free
why can't we all be free
the only thing my people know
must be the ways of the street
we were raised like this
our lives were made like this
cocaine and hennessey fifths
two threes and rocawear fits
our mothers get their checks
get selfish and spend thei' checks
that's why we press eject
from home and quick
to protect the game
serve and protect
not them o p d
let's end the hate in the streets
but why oakland police
they try to carry on funk
the punks go straight to their trunks
and grab the paper and pen
and send you straight to the pen'
they act like they never sinned
you see again and again
that it's the hate in the world
that seals our fate in the world
don't perpetrate for the world
and don't be fake in the world
'cause we're all equally sinners
bill clinton sat back and smoked pinners
but then he didn't inhale
and i do smoke oh well
but one day i will excel
from sellin' drugs and thuggin'
to bein' a father and a husband

-Tydiallmighty, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Stop making excuses for not putting your mind to better uses. You may think your habits are supporting you, but you're supporting them — and they don't care if the bill comes due or when. If you don't snap it, your bad habits will use you up. Haven't you had enough OPD and life in the street, enough incarceration and daily facin' death by a hater's finger on a hairpin trigger? You're playing with suicide, every day you ride while letting your future slide like smoke the wind just blew aside. Stop making excuses for sinning and switch to the side that's winning. Excel or inhale. Try or die, Ty.

don't stress off the little stuff

Standouts

Listen To Me

a lot of people
listen to me
like little cousins
an' play brothers
an' some adults even
who i mess wit' toughly
on the block
'cause we share game
but some of the people
who i can share
my feelings wit'
is my mom
and my wifey
them is the people
i feel comfortable
telling my problems to
because they always
give me good advice
an' always make me
feel better just like
i make my little cousins
feel better when
i give them advice
after listening to them
because they look up to me
it feels good to give advice
to people you love

-Lil' Tay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Amen to your closing lines! Although it's important to remember that showing love doesn't mean co-signing someone's bullshhh . Don't confuse putting a smile on someone's face with helping them solve a problem. Sometimes the truth hurts, when facing up to it is the only way to feel better.

The Mind

the mind is strong
believe me inside my head the funk is on
there's a battle between good and evil
in my mind is where there's a hidden devil
but your strongest muscle is your brain
so i read a lot and try to maintain
in my mind i have time to hide
only for a second till it's time
in my mind is too much pride
in my mind there's too much surprise
in my mind i stand up to the enemy
in my mind i have courage when
the sun falls and the moon rises
in my mind i am granted great pleasurable prizes
freedom is strong and walls and bars are solid
like in my mind i am as solid as a rock
so in my mind i'm free even from the time
that ties on the clock
in my mind —

-Ben, 150 Crew

From The Beat: In recovery, they say that you're only as sick as your secrets; and what they mean is what you say about a hidden devil in your mind. Use your writing to bring him out of hiding, for when his lies and false pride are exposed to the light — his secret power begins to die. He is the enemy, and you must take your stand! To face an enemy within demands all the strength in the mind of man. Keep us posted on your battle plan.

Habitually Incarcerated

I have a bad habit, and that would be — getting locked up! For some reason, I keep coming back.

I know that does not seem like a habit, but when I first got locked up, I did not like it. And after that I kept on coming back until I just got used to it! I don't want to be locked up, but I don't really trip off of being here. Sometimes I do, but most of the time, I don't trip.

I need to get rid of this habit before I really get locked up in a prison. I think that's why I don't trip off being in Juvenile Hall, 'cause it is not that bad.

I know how to change it, but it's not that easy. I would have to stop hanging around the people I kick it with. And I don't think I could do that without doing something on my own.

It's not just the people I kick it with. I am also a gang banger. That's why I don't think it will be easy to stop coming back. I'm out. To those in max' and at Camp, or wherever they are — stay up.

-Abo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You could get your high school degree or a GED, and go to college. Then as the years pass, you'll find yourself moving on toward a legitimate career with regular pay. You can be there to help young homies find a better way. Change your playgrounds, playmates and playthings; then help youngsters survive their gangs.

Cutting School Smoking Weed

I had the bad habits of cutting school and smoking weed. And these bad habits got me nowhere but here in the Hall.

I sit here and think to myself about everything I did in the past, and none of what I did was positive; just all negative. So now I'm trying to change my habits and develop positive habits; but sometimes I feel like someone is trying to hold me down.

I did try to change once in the past, but the way I changed — it didn't really help me that much. I am in a gang; I am affiliated with a large gang — and my mind has only the bad habits that I already know about.

It took me coming to the Hall to try and change my ways.

-Johnson, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Some call it "beginner's mind" — that willingness to start fresh and become wholly absorbed in learning new things with the innocent joy of a child. Cut off your old habits cold. Go to school and start fresh. Don't just change at the edges, go to the core of yourself and start there.

Funny How

It's funny how many think I'm a dummy now
I can't blame 'em 'cause obviously nobody trained 'em
But my game can contain and tame 'em
Persuasive as I can be sometimes, I gotta right-lane 'em
Slow down or get off, guess I learned
a lesson earned as the world turns
Ain't no reason to get mad, only express my feelings
off this paper from the pad
And study my formulas for when I get back to the lab

-Dolla Deesa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: How do you plan to tame your critics? We want to believe that your commitment to go "back to the lab" to perfect your formulas is meant to say you will accomplish things in your life that are unrelated to why you're in the Hall. In other words, we hope your "lab" work isn't designed to make you a better "criminal," but instead to make you a better person.

She Keeps Me From Trouble

I have someone very special that listens to me and doesn't judge me — she is my girlfriend, Yvette. She is the most beautiful person on earth.

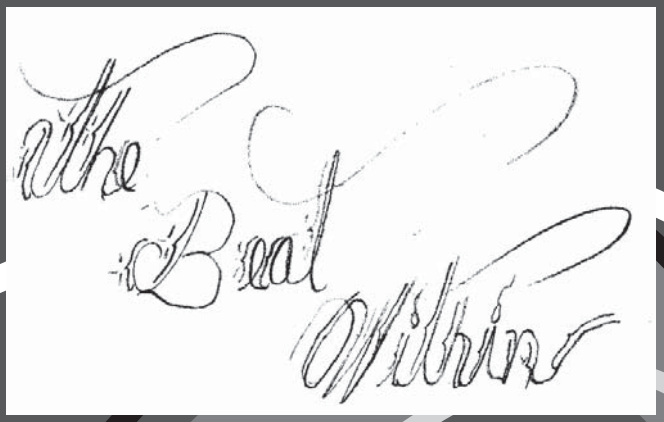
She is nice, smart, caring. She is different. I know everyone is different, but she is the sweetest person. She keeps me from trouble the most she can. She doesn't like me smoking or drinking. When she sees me doing wrong, she tells me in her own sweet way to stop doing wrong — but sometimes I think life is game.

Like she says, if I would listen to her every advice, I would be making straight A's in school. She tries her best. She walks me to class and gives me a sweet kiss and tells me to do all of my work. When I get out of school, she comes over and motivates me to do my homework.

I love her with all my heart, because she cares about me. And she will always be by my side. She is by my side right now and tells me everything will be okay. I hope that it will.

-Krusher, 150 Crew

From The Beat: She's right that everything will be okay — if you will stop playing life like a game! 'Cause in life there are no "get out of jail free" cards. She deserves better than to "be by your side" on visiting days while you watch her cry from the other side of a glass window! You're on an elevator going down, and you can get off right now; or you can ride it into the ground. But you both deserve better than that! Don't you think?



Samuel's Loved Ones

There is someone I have in my life that can listen to me and that I can trust — and that person is my dad. I love my dad with all my heart, and he has always been there for me whenever I need him.

I know I am one of the few people that has a father who actually cares about his son. And I am thankful for having him by my side at all times. Even though I have put him through so much, he hasn't given up on me. He still has hope in me — that one day I am going to change my life.

And I am going to make him proud by proving to him and to my family that I am gonna change my whole life around — I want to change my whole life to prove how much I love my familia.

I'm'a finish my program and get up out of this system, so that I can spend my time with my family instead of being up in here, wasting my time.

I've been wasting my time in and out of the Hall, and by now I have probably lost my girl. But I still have my family! And I hope I never lose them, 'cause that's my life and my reason for livin'.

I gotta keep my head up and live by praying. Until next time. One love, familia!

-Scarface, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your expression of gratitude to a loving father, is itself a gift! Yet it will be a greater gift when you manage to follow through and change your life. Big changes are actually accomplished by taking care to do the little things: pass up that drink or smoke, show up every day at school, get home on time, and, naturally, don't commit a crime.

It's My Life

i live in the raw streets
bad habits come and go
but i'm gonna let you know
that i'll get rid of 'em like a ho
i had the bad habit of smoking
forget it i been stopped toking
on that light green
it might not seem
but yes i will survive
to live my life
— gang banging
you can take it as a bad habit
but i ain't having it
for that is what i follow in life
you take it as if it is bad
but i love it as a wife
that's what i grew up in
and that's how i'll go out
but i tell you right now
i'll take your bad comments and smile
for you will look at it and frown
but i don't give a shhh
it's my life not yours
so you best live with it

-Lil' Jose, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Look at the last lines you wrote. Who has to live with your life? No one but you, and maybe your family: mother, sisters, brothers, that get touched by what you chose. We don't judge when we say, gangbanging will send you to prison or an early grave. Don't listen. Smile if you like, 'cause we're through. But it brings tears to the eyes of those who care about you!

What I Want

When the light goes out do you see the dark
Or is it like the beginning and you don't know where to start
You see something appear more then what they really are
When I look into the sky I see more then just a star
I see an open place where a bird can be free
Where people don't have to be stuck inside the penitentiary
It's where we can get out and free our soul
Where we don't trip off time and won't grow old
It's where I can be me and get as high as I want
Open up a forty or two and then get drunk
No one else is up there so I won't have funk
But most of all I'm out of this place and that's what I want!

-Ant-Dogg, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What we admire most about this piece is that you allow your imagination to take wing and fly — and imagination has saved more than a few prisoners. We can't say our ideal place of freedom would look just like yours (we're not that crazy about getting drunk...), but this is your dream, not ours. Even those of us not locked up often dream of a place where we can be free from strife and stress, so we feel your desperate dream, and we encourage you to dream on. And then work toward making it a reality.

Standouts

What Do I See?

what do i see
what do i see
i see a beautiful woman
lying next to me

what do i see
what do i see
i see my grandma gone
and i'm lonely

what do i see
what do i see
i see something wrong
and something is
happening to me

what do i see
what do i see
i see there's nothing
in this world
it's just crazy

what do i see
what do i see
i see myself in juvie

-Jamerl, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's good to see you again, but we don't like seeing you in here again. If you see nothing in the life you're living, it's time for a change. There are worlds beyond the world you've been living. Become an explorer of new worlds. (We're sorry for the loss of your grandma, but she lives in your heart.)

Listening

If I had someone who listened to me, I feel that I would not be in here because the things I go through put me in a bad place. Not being able to talk to someone and just holding it in got me here.

But if I would had told my people that I got a girl pregnant I would have had to suffer the consequences, but I would have had some support and would not have been in here going through hell.

If I can get out I am going to stop holding shhh in and start letting shhh out with my family and with my baby mama 'cause when I came in here I was stupid, but now I am smart about my life. And I know what I got to do to help me stay up out of here, but that's me.

-Taze, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There's always a solution to every problem. Talking them out will enable you to set your ideas in place so that those thoughts are out and not cluttered in your head. Trust in yo' self so that you'll be able to trust in others. That way you will be able to open up to others when you got things on your mind. It will be hard if you're in your own little world. Stay smart and be a part of something positive.

Changes In My Life

Since I have been here in Juvenile Hall, I have come to realize that I need to make some changes in my life. All I ever think about is getting out, how bad I want it. That might not be exactly what I expected it to be.

I know I am happy when I am free (at home), but it is a fact in most teen's lives, you are more likely to be peer pressured outside of these walls. I have had a lot of time to think, and all of those things in my life didn't make me any happier, they just blocked out the bad stuff. Like using drugs or alcohol doesn't make your problems go away, it just makes them fade.

Being locked up in this place has helped me come to realize, I have something better than all that. I'm not one to preach about my religion, but keeping my faith and giving all my trust to God has made me feel as if that stuff is a part of my past.

I'm going to be 18 in two days, it is time to grow up, and it is time to get a hold of my life.

When I am released, when I get that second chance know that I will have to be strong, and try to keep myself out of situations were I'm at risk. As long as I have the Lord I know that I can be confident in the choices that I am going to make.

-D-Frank, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Time to your self really does help, huh? It's like you were going 100 mph and came to a sudden stop. Now its like you realize all the things you didn't realize when were moving fast. Incarceration may have been a good thing for you. It sounds as if you realize your problems, which is good because now you know what they are can work them out.

Disturbing Dream

on a very ordinary day
just like any other day
i laid my head down to sleep
and i had a disturbing dream
that i still cannot
get out of my head
in my dream i saw
my family getting killed
and i was next
i was running in the dark
i could not see anything
until i landed in an abyss
after that happened i woke up
crying
i was spooked

-Lil' Corey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Being incarcerated and kept away from your family is a sort of temporary death. Until you're ready to make thoughtful changes in your life, it is like you're running through the dark — into an abyss. It's definitely okay to cry, but wake up!

About Kyle's Habits

I have bad habits. I do smoke cigarettes but I broke that by promising my girlfriend I would stop, but it's hard to break from it after becoming used to it so I started back up after some relationship problems.

Now that I'm inside here I can't smoke cigarettes and it's driving me crazy. It's 'cause of all this stress, even now I'm fiending for one, I just don't show it; I hold it in. But I made a vow no matter how much I want a cigarette — I won't smoke just as long as I have my girl. The way I plan on doing this is by side tracking myself from cigarettes by lifting, running, drawing, writing lyrics and playing games.

I have good habits too like I'm a devoted good boyfriend (except for coming in here). I feel like I let her down and that hurts inside but I'll make up for it no matter how long it takes. I'm faithful toward my lady and a trustworthy friend.

-Kyle, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Cigarettes are by far the hardest habit to break. We hope that because you are in Juvenile Hall and you can't have cigs it will be your chance to break the habit. It takes two weeks for nicotine to leave your bloodstream, so if you can shake the stoges — jump on it. The longer you smoke; the harder it is to quit. Can you feel that?

Downside Of Freedom

The downside to freedom is that you could be more vulnerable to seduction as far as drugs, dying, and being called or caught up by the cops. Also taking for family for granted.

My brother was in jail for only a year, yet it was still hard for him to make a living and adjust to the outside world. He now has a record and applying for jobs wasn't as easy, as well as him having to find new friends and situate his self on the outs after not seeing it for a year.

For me after five or ten years I wouldn't know, I'd be lost, but I do know I'd live my life through the Lord Christ and he'd surely direct me upon a straight, narrow, positive path.

Jail also helps rehabilitate and create new healthy habits.

-Ashton-Adogg, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We feel you on how it takes away a part of you, which impacts your life dramatically. Are you making plans for when you get out? Have you ever thought about working on some of necessary life skills when you're down? It can be a plus for when you get released. Maybe learning new skills such as how to write a resume and how to find a job can help you get back on your feet in your transition back in the real world. What kind of new and healthy habits have you taken up?

Yeah, I Hear You

Listening is one of the hardest things that most of us youth have trouble doing. Most kids have that mentality that says, "Yeah I hear you but I ain't listening." That's one of the juvenile's biggest problem in society today.

If everyone would have someone to listen to, they would have thought twice about the crime they committed. Not saying that I listen to the person that told me, but it's the simple fact that I know now to listen to someone that has a lot of knowledge and positive feedback rather than negativity.

-Lil' Qb, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Very insightful and thoughtful piece. Who is the most positive person in your life? Who do you know that will never steer you wrong? Who lifts you up when you're down? Why do you think youth have such a hard time listening?

Some Bad Habits

I do have bad habits and one of them is going to school and not paying attention because I like to talk and be with my friends and not learn anything at school. I got my bad habit by my friends and by myself because I made the choice not to do what I am supposed to do.

I also got them from my cousin because I thought it was ok to cut school. But now I realize that it ain't because once I got on EM, I thought they weren't going to check my attendance but I was wrong. The principal told my PO that I haven't been coming to all my classes so my PO had to call EM and tell them that I wasn't doing my work and they had to come and get me.

But I know now that I should take it seriously and do what I am suppose to do.

-Sam, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Not only is cutting school bad because it can get you locked up — you also lose out on your education. Education is something no one can take from you and will help you in many aspects for the rest of your life. When you are released, how will you stay focused on taking school seriously? Also, how can you stay focused on school and still have time for your friends?

Destiny

the way i get down
only few can do it
that's why i wake up at night
wit' cold sweats goin' thru it
drink a whole bottle of bacardi
and spew it all ova the place
i can look death right in the face
and cut right to the chase
said "you can take me from here
but i'll leave without shedding a tear"
and nothing happened
so i have no fear
ninjas start clapping
but i still sprint like a deer
my destiny is clear
i gotta betta my situation
i gotta move without hesitation
tryin'a get known like the federation
i'm taking education
into consideration
because being ignorant
is too simplistic
i'm trying to go past my present situation
like i'm futuristic
but talkin' is just that
so i gotta get to it
nothing left but to be the best
so i gotta do it

-T-Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We like your rhymes and your beats in time, but you still have some confusion in your mind when it comes to living and dying. The fastest deer on earth when hit with a bullet falls to the turf. It's not a question of fear, that's just ballistics. So if you really want to be futuristic, get out that life before you're another fearless statistic.

Thanks For Listening

The person that listens to me when I have a problem, is my big brother. He has been there for me since day one and always understands where I'm coming from.

My brother has helped me with so many challenges I've gone through, that I need him so much in life — it's like he's my other half! I love my brother, and he is my best friend.

The other person I have grown to get close to is Hanna. She is there when I need to talk to her at night. We talk under our wall about hella stuff. I don't really talk to females up in here — but for Hanna, I will make an exception.

I like having people to talk to. I also talk to my boyfriend. He is also there for me, no matter what. But to those who are there for me — thanks for everything! From the one and only:

-Tiny, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What a blessing to have an older brother you can talk to — one who will listen, understand, and help you when you need it. You are doubly blessed to have found someone you can talk to and trust in the Hall. As you say, it's no place to look for a friend; but you found one without looking.

My brother has helped me with so many challenges

Standouts

To "Helpful" From 150 Crew

ay yo i got yo' words of wisdom
it kinda touched me in ways
but i don't even know who you are
so i don't know what to say
but listen up i'm a man
who's never seen the life of a boy
so i feel like if i do something wrong
his whole life will be destroyed
but you sound like you're pretty
patient
so if you listen then here i go
said you want to know
my baby's momma just turned twenty
years old
see i've never been a child
so i don't know what my son expects
i'll give him respect
with quick pecks
and everythang that comes next
i feel where you're coming from
and girl you sound pretty bold
but i just want to know
how it's good to have a son
at fifteen years old
you can try to be helpful
but i'm regretful
i made a bad choice
don't get me wrong
i love my son
but my life is full of noise
which means i need some silence
can't have a son and still have
violence
i'm'a do what i do best
till i have the right to remain silent
and i been knew right from wrong
and stupid from smart
so i'll know love within my heart
and how to tear it apart
but who are you really inside
is "helpful" just a disguise
or you're just one of them women
who writes to unknown guys
i don't really get it
you got me thinking suspiciously
how are you gon' try to help a ninja
when you're in jail just like me
now do you get where i'm comin' from
excuse me passing my judgement
but i have to find out
if you're one of them girls
whose head's in a basement
but one thing i learned from life
is to depend on myself
because others will bring you down
if you offer just too much help
but that don't mean don't be kind
i respect you speaking yo' mind
maybe we can hook up as friends
and share a wonderful time
but until then i advise you
to respect and love only yourself
'cause once you find yourself inside
you don't need no one else
and that's real
check it out and give me
feedback on how you feel

-Scooby, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We've respected your mind since the first time you laid lines on our pages, but sometimes your thinking is straight outrageous. When you write: "i'm'a still do what i do best / till i have the right to remain silent" — you're doing violence to your son, 'cause if you mean what we're thinking on, it's just a matter of time before you're caught up on one. If you're going to claim to be a man, it's time to start expanding your understanding beyond boyhood dreams and schemes, or you're simply re-enlisting to be living your life in the system. And then you have the nerve to wonder why Helpful would try to reach and teach another detainee who writes in The Beat? Man, that's the whole thang! Don't you see? To manifest love verbally in a community where each helps each rise above the lies of the street and shake the shackles off your feet! We need no more children waiting on, till they start to hating on, absent fathers locked behind gun towers! Yeah, protect your son from violence. But what wounds deeper than a father's distant silence? Be there and be square!

why is it that you be killin' me with your little sweet poems you write about me

I Wanna Know Why

i wanna know why is it that you stay
in my face straight up tryin' to run game
but turn around and smile in the next female's face
and why is it that you be killin' me
with your little sweet poems you write about me
but you writing the same lines to the next female you see
makes me wonder why did i even give you the time of day
'cause if i would've known you were like them other guys
tryin' to play mind games and make me think you liked me
when i guess you don't like what you see
but i ain't trippin' 'cause it ain't gonna change
i'm just gonna let it be
i should've never let you get to me
with your little comments and compliments
you said to make me blush
but i had a feeling it wasn't true
like i always don't want people to tell me they like me
i want them to show me and sure you showed me
that you didn't — but it's cool
i'll be the fool

-Lil' Mama Hanna, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Romance is a distraction from pain, but it won't help you stay free when you're out again. Rise above the drama to change your karma, and center yourself in you. 'Cause Lil' Mama Hanna, inside you, you know what you need to do.

The Old You

thanks for picking me up
when i was down
when i needed a hand
you were always around
i was like a drying dirt
and you planted the seed
and 'cause of you
i'm solid as a statue
and can't nobody hold me
down but you
i feel so safe and secure
when i'm around you
you made me feel so warm
you were like my angel who flew
down from heaven
but all of a sudden
you changed and became
someone new
and i couldn't believe it was you
so hopefully you can return
to the old you

-Lil' Mama Hanna, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When you're locked up and feeling all alone, nothing feels better than a friend to depend on. But everything in the Hall seems subject to change, one minute your happy and the next in pain. Keep your head up even when you're fed up.

Media

your three-second flash has scarred your unborn child
you cry censorship come in the night
burn the book tear the painting
place tape over my eyes i can't handle this truth
but oh how i think these thoughts
stolen innocence lost dreams sad facts
we sell you t v you buy it you're happy
real life played out for you
just sit and look pretty
indulge myself in chocolate and coffee
race through the day just to do it all over again
hate makes the world go 'round
you won't see what i'm saying why would you
magazine ads does anyone care anymore
subliminal messages
join the army no rules to your war
someone so lonely it's okay to cry
i hate you and i don't even know you
i'm innocent
smile for me oh little meager man
why do you do this to yourself
one view decides a nation's fate
don't you even realize
what lies ahead of the path is darkness
my feet are wet an overdose of nothing
my vision is for sale i'm selling out
take a trip forget the way it should be put it on hold
love someone write a paper
the world doesn't want another love song
or spit an' shhh

-Jennifer, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've probably heard the words "stream of consciousness" so often, it's a flood — but the turns and contrasts building up the accumulated force of this assault on media mentality's misrepresentions of reality, indeed, are much like a flood, or an information highway paved over the bones of living giants buried by mountains of discarded magazines, newspapers, televisions and junked computers toxic with yesterday's greed and unbridled ambitions. Or maybe it's a love song you just spit, nostalgic for contrition in a media grown fat on the backs of unrecognizable facts and hopeless acts of personal rebellion (unless you can sell them, might as well send them to hell then).

The Way I Live

Ah, my name be the "Ghost" and
I be that one on the block with a blunt in hand...
Wishing death...
I don't care about a ninja who ain't done shhh for me
I'm 18 years old and almost died in these streets
That' why I keep heat when I'm riding in the seat
When I'm sleeping under my pillow with one eye open
Thing' going through my mind while I' doing my crime
My grandmother praying for me all the time
When I was pushing my half and O's
When I had that blunt in my mouth
Paranoid watching my back,
people with flags shot me dead in my back
That a fact
All the Ghost speak is the truth
So open up our third eye and see what I'm bring' to you
Street life
I might die out here
Or maybe not
I might make it out of the hood
This was my mission statement
The way I live
There's nothing wrong with sling' rock
As long as you feeding your kid
Me, I had no kids
This the life I choose
But look, words getting short
So this' how I'm going to leave for now
Look for the Ghost in The Beat
And I'll put you down on a few things
That went on in my life
So holla at the Ghost

-Ghost, Virginia

From The Beat: It sounds like you've been through a lot and done a lot, Ghost. This life sounds hard. Do you want to continue living this way? It sounds like you have been hurt so much that you don't care about anyone else. How can you learn to respect other people (not rob, cheat or hurt them) even if they have never have done anything for you? It's a fact that slanging rock indirectly hurts families of the user and the seller. How could a parent provide for their kids or a person make money in a legit way so they won't get locked up or caught up in this lifestyle? This is the life you choose, but has it brought real happiness? We look forward to hearing more about your life.

A Bad Trip And Thank You

Some people can't relate to a bad trip. I have never had a bad trip but one of my friends did. One day, one of my friends came over to my house to get high. Well I didn't know that he did other drugs that day.

So we are sitting in a little car (two-door car) just hot boxing away. I looked over at him. His head was on the wheel and he was saying, "I'm drowning." I'm just sitting there laughing at him, thinking he's just playing, while I wiped trees from my eye.

He was not breathing. I got scared and grabbed his shoulder and hit him real hard on the nose. It started to bleed. He sat up and said thank you. I looked at the blood on his shirt. Thinking to myself, God, that was a bad trip.

-Frog, Virgnia

From The Beat: That was scary! We can't believe you hit him. I guess that was your instinct and it worked but he was just lucky. If you can't go clean, be careful if you are using drugs. People die everyday from overdosing or mixing drugs. Why do/did you smoke so much?

Standouts

Built Or Broken

Being incarcerated helps me to build myself up and it brings me down. It helps me because I go to school, go to church and play basketball. But I always feel down because it doesn't seem like no one here is trying to help me. It's hard when you don't get no mail or visits. It seems to me that no one in my family cares about me. I write people everyday and never hear nothing back.

Being locked up is very stressful because you always got people that run their mouth and then staff mess' with you just to use their authority. Then you got to be around some immature people all day. I'm trying to maintain and chill but it seem' like I can't get no help. Talking to me all the time is not going to help me most of the time.

I'm trying to control my anger before I seriously hurt someone. People get the wrong perception of me because I'm quiet. I'm just trying to chill and do something different with my life. Being locked up is not fun because you always got people telling you what to do and you be surrounded by lames. I just feel like giving up sometimes but you got to stay out of trouble just to go home. To all you people locked down, keep your head up and stay strong. I'm out.

-Lil' Kelly, Virginia

From The Beat: It takes a wise and courageous person to put their feeling out there. Your family and so-called friends probably still care for you but don't know how to communicate. Maybe you didn't know how to either when you were on the outs. Practice this skill of communication and your relationships will deepen. It's not good that you feel you can't get any help. Have you tried to ask for it in all the ways possible there? Have you read any books that can put your mind at ease or give you some ideas about working through your anger in a way that won't hurt yourself or others? "They who seek shall find." Till then, keep writing and trying like your doing.

Built Or Broken Faith

The sunsets crept
My faith stretched thin
And I fell to the pressure
Of the forces within
Seasons past
An image attained
Alpha among peers
But at the cost of an innocence stained
Bang! Bang!
Institutional Gods show faith
And turn the page
Now I start again
On a different stage

-Brixx, Virginia

From The Beat: The images you use pierce the mind and heart. The struggle with violent memories and anger versus your faith is real. Work through the memories and anger while you figure out your relationship with a higher power. Remember this relationship is personal and unique. How can you be motivated by love instead of fear?

El Amor De Mi Jefita

Para mi jefita linda y querida que extraño tanto. Ella es la persona que más quiero en mi vida, la quiero más que a la mía. Ella es la razón por la que ahora quiero cambiar. Espero que me perdone por todo lo que he echo malo porque siento que no me puedo perdonar sólo. Son tantas las lágrimas que salen de sus ojos tan hermosos, y todo es por mi culpa. Ahora no la puedo ver.

Busco una salida sólo para poder cambiar mi vida, pero se ve tan lejos esa puerta y ya me estoy dando por vencido. Siento que mi vida se acaba, de eso estoy convencido, y no los trato de engañar. Es la vida que he escojido pero por el amor de mi madre, de esa vida mala me tengo que alejar. Ahora, busco un cambio y espero encontrarlo antes que la muerte me encuentre y sea muy tarde para lograrlo.

From The Beat: Nos parece muy bien, sigue adelante, hazla feliz. Todos nosotros estamos seguro que la harás feliz, a ella y también a ti mismo. Ella ha sufrido mucho y ya es tiempo que en vez de verle la cara arrugada por tantos sufriemiento, empiece a tener la sonrisa en su cara. No te des por vencido, sigue luchando por esa salida, la verdad es que tu salida está muy cerca de ti. Tienes que darte cuenta que es lo que realmente te falta para estar feliz y alejarte de todo lo malo.

The Love From My Mother

For my dearly beloved mother and wonderful mother whom I miss so much, she is the person that I love the most in my life. Her happiness means more to me than mine. She is the reason why I want to change. I hope that she forgives me for all the bad things that I have done because I feel like I can't even forgive myself. The tears that fall from her beautiful eyes are many, and it's my fault that she's crying. Now, I can't even see her.

I'm looking for a way out but that exit seems to be very far, and I feel like I'm giving up. I feel my life is ending, that I'm sure, and I'm not trying to lie to you. It's the life I've chosen, but for the love I have towards my mother, I have to get away from this messed up life. Now, I'm looking for a change and I expecting to find it soon before death finds me first, and before it's too late to make it through.

-Pollo 150 Crew

Tootles!

Tuesday, June 22
I take my GED
Friday, June 25
I will be free
Once I have been released
2 1/2 months in here
Life on the outs
Is somewhat a fear
I don't want to get locked up
I want to be able to see my friends
And say "What's up?"
I can't wait
No more getting in trouble
I'm going to lay low
And be subtle
Going to the beach
Watching the crabs scuttle
Eating meals that are good
Layin' low, chillin' in my 'hood
Get a job
Stop living like a slob
Get a dog
Name it Bob

-Tim, Marin

From The Beat: Sounds like spending spring in Juvy is enough to convince you that you don't need to ever go back. If so, Juvy has done its job. Beautiful luck to you! What about life on the outs puts somewhat a fear in you? How will you be able to resist the temptations that await you?

Gente Con Quien Puedo Hablar Y Con°ar

Si, yo tengo a alguién con quien yo le puedo contar cualquier cosa , y tener confianza en el/ella. Hay personas con quien confío y confía mí y esas personas son varias. Tambien tengo a muchas personas que me juzgan, pero me dan consejos.

Hay gente que juzgan pero no lo hacen con mala intención, lo hacen para ver si nos da verguenza porque de esa manera no lo volvamos a hacer lo mismo. La verdad es que si no tenemos tan siquiera un poco de sangre en la cara, lo hacemos de nuevo.

Si alguién me dice algo que no me gusta no me enojaría, porque a lo mejor esa persona me esta diciendo algo que esa persona pasó y no quiere que uno pase por ese camino. Y más bien le doy gracias por sus consejos.

From The Beat: Es verdad hay muchísima gente que quiero lo mejor para aquellos que andan en malos pasos, esas personas les dan consejos, y hay veces que esos consejos los agarran con mala intención. Esperamos que te pegues más a esas personas para que te ayuden a salir adelante. Es muy bueno tener a quien confiar de verdad que sí.

People Whom I Can Talk To And Con°de In

Yes, I do have someone who I can talk to about whatever and confide in him/her. There are several people whom I can talk to about whatever and confide in. I also have plenty of people that judge me, but they give me advice.

There are people that judge me, but they don't have any bad intent behind it. They just do it to see if I get embarrassed because by doing so, we won't do it again. The truth is that if we aren't ashamed of ourselves, we would do it again.

If someone tells me something I don't like, I wouldn't get mad because that person might be telling me something he has gone through, and he doesn't want me to go through the same path. Instead, I would thank that person.

-Juan 150 Crew

Malos Vicios

¿Q-Vo Raza? Pues, soy Juan, todavía estoy torcido y no sé para cuando. Mi vicio malo es el cigarro. Yo lo agarré de los 12 años y no sé como dejarlo aunque aqui no fumo. No sé que vaya a pasar cuando salga, si es que salgo o sino, pues ni modo....

Pues, yo lo agarré con un tío. Cuando estabamos trabajando,él estaba fumando, yo me lo quedaba viendo y él me dijo que si quería, y yo le dije que sí. En la primer toque, me estaba hogando hasta que ya casi lloraba porque no podía respirar. Él nomas se estaba riyendo de mí, y me dijo, "hey guey para que no me andes pidiendo" Pero, antes de eso, yo hacía cigarritos de papel y de hojas, o de sacate, pero eso era cuando era morillo. Ahora, ya estoy grandecito y no sé como dejar el cigarro en paz. Eso es todo.

From The Beat: Creemos que este es un buen comienzo como dejar de fumar. Sabemos que ahorita ya no tienes esas ganas de fumar como cuando entrastes, verdad. Entonces, lo único que puedes hacer es no pensar en eso, y sencillamente cuando salgas no fumar. Estamos cien por ciento seguros que no tienes ganas de fumar ahorita. Te decimos un secreto, el quien te está escribiendo esto, fumaba antes, y después de haber caído preso por mucho tiempo, salió y no volvió a fumar. Quieres parar, ya parastes, quieres volver a fumar, espera para que salgas, quieres parar, te repetimos, no tienes porque fumar. Nadie te está poniendo una pistola en tu mente para que fumes.

Bad Habits

What's up people? This is Juan, I'm still locked up and I don't know until when. My bad habit is cigarettes. I started it when I was 12 years old, and now I don't know how to stop, even now I can't smoke in here. I don't know what will happen when I get out, if I get to get out.

Well, I got it through my uncle. When we were working, he was smoking, I would stare at him, and he asked me if I wanted to smoke, and I said, yes. On my first hit, I was choking that I almost cried because I couldn't breathe. He was just laughing at me, and said, "Hey dummy, that is what you get for asking me." But before that, I used to make cigarettes with paper, leaves, or grass, but when I was really little. Now, I'm older and I don't know how to leave cigarettes alone. That is all.

-Juan Marin

How Could This Happen?

Who would have ever thought I would end up here? How could this happen? I don't belong here. It's weird how you think you got everything figured out, but underneath, you don't. I'm feeling sad and hurt at the same time.

Do you know what it feels like when your own parents are ashamed of you? Have you ever thought of death, but didn't have the guts to do it? How could this happen to me? I never got in trouble before. I always did the right thing, but I was in the wrong place at the wrong time. But never again will this happen to me. I'm gonna make sure that I will never have to say, "How Could This Happen?"

I'd like to say I love my mom very much. Grandma, you are my everything. I don't know where I'll be without you. And to all my friends and family members, I love you deeply.

I'll be transferred tomorrow and then I'll get released.

-Dionne, Marin

From The Beat: Your piece speaks to us in various ways. Some parents have the notion that their children are an extension of them. Therefore if their child does the smallest thing wrong, they flip and get all ashamed. Your parents have provided a guide for you, but finally you're going to have to decide for yourself what's valuable in life and what you want for your life. It sounds like you just got caught up this one time. Can you take responsibility for whatever went down, forgive yourself, and keep on living your life? It's hard to show your parents that you've changed, but eventually, they will see the difference.

Do you know what it feels like when your own parents are ashamed of you? Have you ever thought of death, but didn't have the guts to do it?

Standouts

The Way I Feel

I am tired of how The Beat Within talkin' about how gang members use Cesar Chavez as a gang symbol! You need to get it right! I know you read some people's stuff that say that, but me, "naw!"

To me, Cesar Chavez is a straight Chicano who stood up and smashed for his people! Well, I was just gettin' tired of The Beat speakin' gang members and tryin' to put us down for what we do! So, to all that speak bad on us, (I am talkin' about my gang, not my rivals. Forget them fools). I just wanted to let you know before you speak on us, find out what we're about!

I know some of The Beat say they know, but kept it real! If you ain't one of us or ain't up on game, you don't know! I got hella uncle's and my dad that let me know the real! So go find out before you speak! You ain't findin' out from me because I was taught to not give game up to someone that is not one of my kind! And in one of the pieces you, The Beat Within, put that Cesar Chavez was fighting a real "cause!" (I know he was). I felt disrespected by that because the "cause" we are fighting for is real! So, I wanted to let you know how I felt about that response!

See, Cesar Chavez was fighting for the injustices that were being committed against us! And he gave his life! See, I know my "culture" and I don't use him as a gang symbol! I know some do, but I don't, so I just wanted to let you know I felt disrespected about that! I am out!

-Green Eyes, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We are sorry that you feel disrespected but Cesar Chavez would roll over in his grave if he knew that Latinos were killing other Latinos and using his name to justify it. Cesar fought for Latino rights — not for Latino deaths. We feel disrespected when y'all say that the two of you are fighting for the same "cause." All right BWO writers weigh in on this, educate this young!

Mom, Don't Give Up On Me

While bringing me up you tried your best
but all I did was made you stress
I never meant to hurt you if I did
I was immature then I only was a kid
at times I thought you were my enemy
but in reality you were looking out for me.
Cared but didn't know it
didn't know how to show it
love you mom but do you know…
A young teen — thirteen years they took me away
to sit in a cell 24 hours a day.
I think about home every day and every night
man I'm trying so hard to make this right
but it's hard to do when everybody want to fight
that why I'm sitting back trying to be tight
I love you mom. Just don't give up on me!

-Jermaica, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We know it's a hard situation that you're in, but keep thinking bout going home and never give in. We're so sorry to see you back Jermaica! It's okay; every parent stresses, it's a 24/7 job it ain't easy it's restless. People wanna fight 'cause they ain't trying to get straight, so don't get fished into the bait, and get caught up in all that hate. Don't get tempted when push comes to shove, just keep thinking that you wanna go home to the mom that you love.

Mi Mamá Es La Única Persona

"What's up Beat?" La única persona con la que puedo hablar es con mi madrecita. Pero lo que pasa es que aveces nos da verguerza hablar con nuestras madres. Ella siempre me dijo de las consequencias que traían las cosas malas, pero yo decia, "¿que sabe ella de lo que yo estoy pasando" y me cerraba en mi mismo, y no le decía nada. Prefería callarme y el resultado fue que vine aqui. Aunque ella está sufriendo mucho, siempre me apoya y me dice, "que pase lo que pase, siempre me van a apoyar." Ella viene a visitarme aunque esté cansada y sin fuerzas, después de trabajar, solo para verme y apoyarme.

Durante el tiempo que he estado aqui, me he dado cuenta de que debí de haber escuchado a mi viejito cuando me decia, "¿como estas? ¿estas bien?" Y yo le decía que estaba bien. El preguntaba que si todo estaba bien y que si tenía problemas, y yo le decía que todo marchaba bien.,

Mama, solo te quiero decir que te pido perdon por todo el daño que te hice. Sólo te pido una oportunidad y vas a ver que vas a estar orgullosa de mi. Te pido perdon por no haberte escuchado cuando me hablabas. Mamita, te pido perdón.

From The Beat: Ya viste el resultado. Talvez con esta experiencia tú llegues a ver que la vida tiene gente que de verdad quiere que estes bien. ¿Que te cuesta hacerle caso a la gente que te quiere y quiere lo mejor para ti? Ve a tu madrecita, todo el efuerzo que ella hace por ti, salir del trabajo solo para verte. Estamos seguro que esa oportunidad te la dará con todo amor, y que ahi tendrás ese espacio que has estado esperando para poder probarle a tu madre, a todo el mundo y a ti mismo que si puedes. Sigue adelante…

My Mom Is The Only Person

"What's up Beat?" The only person whom I can talk to is my mother, but what happens is that at times, we are embarrassed to talk to our mothers in public. She would always give me advice about what bad things would bring me problems, but I always said, "What does she know about what I am going through?" And I locked myself in my own world and I didn't tell her anything. I preferred to stay quiet and the result was that I ended up coming in here. Even though she was suffering a lot, she always supports me and tells me, "No matter what happens, we're always going to support you." Even though she's married and works, without even fussing about it, she comes to see me and let me know that she has my back.

During the time that I have been in here, I've come to realize that I should have listened to my old man when he would tell me, "How are you doing? Are you alright?" And I would tell him that I was alright. He would ask me if everything was alright and if I had problems, and I would tell him that everything was alright.

Mother, I just want to tell you that I am sorry and I hope that you can forgive me for all the damage that I have caused you. I just wish for one opportunity and you're going to see that you're going to be happy with me. I ask for your forgiveness for not having listened to you when you would talk to me. Mother, I'm sorry.

-Pastrulo B1 SF/YGC

Aunque ella está sufriendo mucho, siempre me apoya y me dice, "que pase lo que pase, siempre me van a apoyar.

What I Go Through

Thoughts: Hey Gypsy, do you think that the judge is going to give you a break and let you go to camp?
Thoughts answering the question for me: No, the hell with you. You are going to the Y to be a prisoner.
Gypsy: Why do my own thoughts fight against me?
Thoughts: Gypsy, don't worry. You'll get to go to Camp. Keep your hopes up.
Gypsy: Stay cool, keep a cool head, and don't worry; it's your first case.
Thoughts: First case, but the DA gave you a deal that will land you in the Y, and the judge doesn't like you.
Gypsy: Whatever. I know that you are on their team and you would like to see me in the Y, huh? So, I can learn about the inside and a prisoner? Well, I say the hell with you.
Thoughts: Yeah, OK, the hell with me, huh? Look, you are the one that is screwed. I am just your thought.
Gypsy: I know we talk more with each other than with anybody else, so can I ask you something?
Thoughts: I guess so.
Gypsy: Why for once can me and you just get along to do good so I can have good thoughts?
Thoughts: You know what? I just don't like the way you do things. That's why.
Gypsy: Well, how about I change? Will you change to help me?
Thoughts: Well, let me see. You start and you know what? I will do my part to change because I see you really would like to change.
Gypsy: Well, I started to change the first day that I got here.
Thoughts: Well, you know what? I call a truce, OK? I'll help you do good, but I must see you do good for me to help you think good.
Gypsy: O.K., I'll do my part so we can get out of all the crap that we're in, OK?
Thoughts: OK, we will do it together.
Gypsy: So is this the day the war between you and I ends?
Thoughts: Yes.

-The Gypsy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There is an old saying, "Beware of your thoughts for they become your actions. Beware of your actions for they become your behavior. Beware of your behavior for it becomes your character." Can you control your thought or rid away negative thoughts? That is a good exercise. Try, "I don't want to think this way. Go away." Then try to come up with a more positive resolution. It works for some people so at least give it a try.

Fiction That's Real

i was walking down
the street one day
drinking a beer when a boy come
and knocked the beer down
i got mad and tried to shoot
him with a gun but he
got back at me
with a nine millimeter and we
both got hit in our chests
because we shot at the same time
and now we're both in the same
hospital and i know
we shouldn't have done that

-Chris and Lil' Al, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your narrative poem brings your meaning home to your reader locked in a room lost in the gloom of thinking about what he used to do and shouldn't have done, too.

Thoughts: Well, you know what? I call a truce, OK? I'll help you do good, but I must see you do good for me to help you think good.

Dear Mom

I make you mad, and some days I make you laugh.
Bein' fifteen ain't easy.
I want you to know I love you.
Smokin' and drinkin' made me
start thinkin'.
You know I've never listened to you,
but I know I can get a change
in my life.
So if you can you pray for me,
ask God to give me a better life.
Love you baby

-Young Mocha, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a sweet letter to your mom you should tell her in person how you feel. We pray for you to have a better life too, but it's up to you to make the effort to change and recognize that you have the potential to do something better with your life. All it takes is ambition and determination — and taking that first step.

Freedom

The only way I can really explain freedom is paradise. 'Cause when you're in here, locked up, that's what freedom is to you. But when you're on the outs, you don't think about what freedom means to you. But when you get locked up the first thing you say is "I want to get out," but we wasn't thinking about our freedom when we were committing the crime.

Sometimes, it ain't our fault 'cause drugs and alcohol makes us do stupid things, but at the same time when we're not high off something, we still do stupid things. But all I got to say is that everyone in the Halls thinks freedom is paradise.

-Lil' Carlos, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Many of us do take our freedom for granted when we have it right before our eyes, that's why it is important to make sure that we don't do anything to jeopardize our freedom and make sure that our next move is our best move. Also, what ever a person does under the influence of alcohol or drugs is that person's responsibility. If you flip when you sip — then be ready for the trip.

Standouts

Domo & Boog Money's

What I Want

Wanting to know what's going on and I can't even know because my head is just so blurry. I'm trying to cope and find out where I'm going.

I'm sitting in here wishing that I could go home waiting for that day. I know that it's soon, but I would love to know what day it will be. It will make me feel a lot better to know. I mean, I miss my brother, my sister, and niece. I can't wait to hold them in my arms. This is the longest that I've been away from them. It's really starting to hurt.

And I can't wait to get out and move in with this girl that has been living across the street from where I live for seven years, and we're now just starting to become hella close. I mean, she's already been through what I've gone through and I'm going to move in with her.

She's 21 and I'm 18. She said she's ready for me, so it's all good, and I just got out of a two-year relationship.

-Domo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Well, we don't know what to tell you there, but we know you don't want to enter a relationship on the rebound, you feel? You may end up hurting her and yourself in the process. Think this one through. Plus, if you enter a relationship on the rebound, the feelings may not be real. And just last week in your piece about your bad trip on crystal meth, you said that you are still with your ex lady. What's up with that?

This Ain't It

This ain't it
waking up for wash up when I can still sleep
This ain't it
when I got to be locked up to write to The Beat
This ain't it
I got pain in my feet
Can't sleep comfortably 'cause the Halls ain't sweet,
but it's pain I know
and this ain't it.
RIP Ray-Ray

-Boog Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're right — this ain't it — but that's all up to you. Life, much like time is what you make it, so how can you make the best of it?

Empty Inside

Empty
no way of knowing how to feel
All alone
Sitting in this little box
and I can't receive a letter
I don't want to make a phone call
'cause no one will answer
It seems like everybody is turning
their backs on me
'cause I'm 18
I'm letting time pass me by
When I could've been at home
It feels like I almost forgot how to...
Love, feel, touch, see, and hear
All these feelings are a daze to me
So what do I feel?
Empty inside
There's nothing to feel
So much pain
How can I feel?
My soul feels like it's slowly dying
But I keep pushing for it to stay alive
So I ask myself
What do I feel?
A lot of
(Emptiness).

-Domo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You feel empty for now because you feel alone, but you won't always feel this way. You will learn how to feel, touch, see and hear again once you are out of this negative environment. Do you think that you will embrace love and belongingness in your life again? Remember, you have a long road ahead of you and you will meet many people that will fill your heart and break your heart. Keep fighting to feel alive. Never give up. Keep your hopes and head up!

Mind-Racing

Mind-racing
What to do?
How to feel?
Can't go nowhere?
Stuck here in this room
With all my thoughts
They build up
It feels
Like my head is going to explode
All I hear is boom!
Boom! In my head
I try to sleep
It won't work
It can't
Mind's racing
Too fast, so many thoughts
Going crazy
Don't know what to do
Take a deep breath, hold
it, hold it, and hold it
Longer, a little bit longer
Mind goes blank
Where am I?
Love,

-Domo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The good news is that you're not gong crazy. We all go through this at one point in our lives or another. Are your thoughts keeping you awake at night? Have you ever tried to control your thoughts? It sounds crazy, but try something like repeating to yourself: "What ever happens, I'm going to get through this. I'm going to be all right." It's natural to have your mind race with thoughts galore, but you have to know which thoughts to follow. Much luck and love from The Beat!

Beyond The Walls

As I seek my pain
beyond these walls,
I notice the terrible things,
as well as the horrible falls.
I miss out on all of y'all,
but now my life in this room seems very small,
but when I was livin' it large,
I had dreams to go far,
but it seems like it is over
and I ain't even went to the yard.
It seems like basketball
and I'm on defense
and I can't even stop the guard,
but it's back to jail life,
and noticing these terrible falls,
but I know my pain goes
beyond this wall.
RIP Ray-Ray

-Boog Money, 150 Crew

From the Beat: Just because you are locked, that doesn't mean that all your dreams are washed away. Just because your pain is deep, doesn't mean it will always be that way. What can you do so that you can get up after a terrible fall? How can you make sure that your soul doesn't die inside those walls?

Really Bad Habit

My bad habits came from
my surroundings,
but I didn't have to be a
part of it,
I got sucked in,
I probably could have
avoided it,
but it be yo' crowds.
My cousin died 'cause of
his habits
of wanting to be outside
all the time.
His last time out, he died,
I hate his habit because it led to his death.
At first I was mad,
but now I know he's looking over me and the family.
RIP Ray-Ray

-Boog Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Why do you think that there are so many people in Oakland dying left and right? Why are folks so quick to tote guns? Why isn't it like this in other cities? And what do you learn form the loss of your cousin? Has it changed you?

Escuchar

No tengo a nadie con quien yo pueda hablar y que me escuche para pedirle consejos. La única persona que yo le tengo confianza es a mí mismo. No tengo a nadie más. Sí, desearía tener a una persona que le pueda platicar mis problemas y mis tatos de felicidad. Le platicaría todo lo que hiciera y lo que pensaría hacer. Le pidiera consejos y le preguntaría algunas preguntas como por ejemplo, a que hora de la noche debo estar en casa. Si es bueno andar en pandillas o no. A donde lleban las pandillas.

From The Beat: Ya nos tienes a nosotros, nosotros te escuchamos y sabemos que muchos te escucharan cuando lean este pedazo. Siempre que necesites ser escuchado, recuerda que nos tienes a nosotros y que nosotros nunca te daremos la espalda. Sabes, nosotros estamos seguro que hay gente que quiere escucharte, pero el problema eres tú que no te das a escuchar.

Listen

I don't have anyone whom I can talk to, who'll listen to me, and would give me advice. The person that I trust is myself. I don't trust anybody but me, myself, and I.

Yes, I would like to have someone whom I could confide in and talk about my problems, and my happy moments, as well. I would talk to that person about everything that I do and what I plan on doing. I would ask for his/her advice and I would ask them certain questions. For example: "What time at night should I be at home?" "Is it good to be in gangs or not?" "Where do gang-members go?"

-Chino, 150 Crew

La Más Hermosa

Cada día de mi vida, te lo dedico
y cada caricia que te doy.
Te pido perdón por no estar contigo.
Yo he estado en esta prisión por mucho tiempo.
Tanto tiempo ha pasado
desde la última vez que vi a tu postro,
pero no lo e olvidado..
Fui sentenciado a este cuarto como un ánimal,
pero me acuerdo que te tengo a ti,
y me lleno de felicidad.
Pero, con mucho dolor,
me pongo a llorar
porque no recordadome de ti no es lo mismo como
verte, tocarte, besarte y abrasarte.
Le doy gracias a Dios porque te puso en mi vida.
Si pudiera, te daria mi vida porque tu eres
la mujercita mas hermosa y bonita
que jamas había visto en mi vida. Te amo Destiny M.

From The Beat: Si ella es tu amor de nunca, porque la estas dejando escapar? No seas tonto, si amas a esta persona, ve con ella y no te separes de ella, porque te puede estar necesitando en estos momentos. Deja todo lo negativo y buscala a ella. Si ella te quiero, no habrá nada que los separe.

The Most Beautiful Woman

Every day of my life, I dedicate them to you
And every time I touch you
I'm sorry for not being by your side
I've been in this prison for a long time
So much time has passed
Since the last time I saw your face
But I have not forgotten it
I was sentenced to this room like an animal
But I remind myself that I still have you
And I get full of happiness.
But, with much pain
I start to cry
Because being able to remember you is
Not the same as seeing you, touching you, kissing you, and hugging you
I give thanks to God because he put you in my life.
If I could, I would give you my life because you are
The most beautiful and wonderful woman
That I have ever laid eyes on in my life
I love you Destiny

-Chiquillin, 150 Crew

Mi Primer Toque

Chale, todavía recuerdo cuando probé mi primer toque de mota. Fue un día común y corriente como los demás, pero desde ese día, mi vida cambió. Fue en México, en un rancho cuando uno de mis amigos sacó un cigarro de mariguana. Yo, al principio no quice, pero la duda de saber que se sentía me venció, luego agarré el cigarro y me lo fumé.

Desde ese día es muy dificil para mí dejar las drogas. Luego, agarre el vicio del cigarro, luego, la cranca y concaína. Ahora, soy un pinche boracho, un chico loco, que vive la vida rapida. Sólo les digo a esos chavos que van empazando que nunca hagas drogas porque van a acabar mal.

From The Beat: Chale, se nota que desde muy chavo has estado metido en estas cosas. Deberias de buscar la manera como olvidarte de estas cosas que has estado haciendo. Todos tenemos muchas oportunidades en este mundo, y nunca es tarde. Nosotros conocemos a miles de personas que han hecho estos tipos de cosas, pero cuando ya se dan cuenta que la han regado, ellos cambian para bien. La mayoria de la gente que vez en tu alrededor, sea abogado, los staff, talvez gente de tu familia, han usado droga, pero siempre hay que ponerle un stop a todo esto. Y creemos que ya es hora que le pongas un fin a esta tonteras. Gracias por tu consejos, esperamos que ellos lo tomen a bien.

My Fist Hit

Damn, I still remember when I tried my first hit of weed. It was a common day like others, but since that time, my life changed. It was in a ranch in Mexico, when one of my homies brought up a joint of marijuana. At the beginning, I didn't want any, but the temptation of experiencing how it felt defeated me, and I took the joint and I smoked it.

Since then, it is really hard for me to stop using. Then, I got the habit of smocking cigarettes, then crank and now cocaine. Now I'm drunk, a crazy guy, who lives the fast life. I just want to tell the guys who are starting this mess not to do drugs because you will end up bad.

-Jacob Marin

Un falso Paraíso

Si estoy libre me tengo que enfrentar con las cosas de las calles, pero sólo hay unas opciones que son relacionada, perder o ganar y morir o vivir.

From The Beat: Esperamos que escojas las mejores opciones, las cuales te lleben a un buen camino, no a destruirte.

A False Paradise

If I'm free I have to face a lot of things on the streets. But I only have a few options that are related, and those are to win or to lose and to die or to live.

-Juan 150 Crew

I would like to have someone whom I could confide in and talk about my problems, and my happy moments, as well.

Para Ibet

Para Ibet
Hermosa mariposa
Desde que te ví,
Me enamore de ti.
Me gustas
Tanto. Solo con verte me
Haces sonreir.
Eres mi lucero que me da las
Ganas de vivir.
Es por eso que contigo, mi
vida quiero compartir.

From The Beat: No dejes que esa mariposa te deje, si tanto la quieres lucha por ella. Las cosas se tienen que buscar, si realmente las quieres. En tus mano está ella para tu vida.

For Ibet

My beautiful butterfly
Since the moment I first laid my eyes
on you
I fell in love with you
I like you a lot
Just by seeing you
You make me smile
You are my shining star that gives me
The will to live
That's why
I want to share my life with you.

-Dex, 150-Crew

"Listening"

Listening Ear

Yes, I have some that will listen to me — my bra; he listens to me all the time. I look to him for an ear and he is always there.

Like for the mess that I am in right now, when I call him, he tells me you're going to beat the case because he knows that I know that I did not do it, and he gives me all kinds of advice.

-Shannon

From The Beat: Your brother sounds like a really good sibling. How do you show him that you appreciate him? Do you listen to him in return?

Start Listening to My Family

My mom is the one that listens to me, because she loves me — but I did not listen to her!

I wish that I had listened to my mom and listened to my friends. I am stupid for not listening! But if I get out of the Hall, I will start listening!

-Lil' Sammy

From The Beat: And when you draw the lines that you will not cross, don't draw them right at the edge of trouble. Take a few steps back. Which is to say, listen, on the little things, too.

I can talk to my mom about stuff I can't talk to other people about.

Listening From Within

i have five people
who listen to me
i talk to them all the time
even in room fifteen
i can do this because
they are in my head
... just kidding

-Brent

From The Beat: The ancient Greeks placed virtues in various organs of the body and imagined they would then argue in audible voices about the choices of what's best to do next.

My Listening Mom

When The Beat Within asked if we had someone that listens to me, the answer is yes. The person that can listen to me is my mom.

I can tell my mom anything and I can trust her with my life. I love her and she loves me and she lets me know that I can tell her anything. I love her. Mom, I love you and thank you for listening to me.

-Lil' K

From The Beat: It's good that your mom listens to everything you have to say. We're sure your mom doesn't like to see you locked up, so try to stay out next time so you and your mom can talk whenever you feel like it instead of just talking through visits and collect calls.

Who Do I Listen To

I listen to my brother and my girl. They help me maintain and always know the right words to say to me when I'm feelin' down.

They are basically my backbone and support, but they're always there for me and always will be. If they give me advice, (especially my girl), I always listen to it.

My brother gives me advice to keep strong through hard times. If I need advice or guidance, then I'll talk to my girl or my brother.

-Lil' Ray

From The Beat: Do you also offer support to them in return? How do you show these two wonderful people appreciation?

My Mom Listens

Someone that listens to me, is my mom. She can understand me. She knows what I'm going through, 'cause she's been through most of the stuff that I been going through.

So I can talk to my mom about stuff I can't talk to other people about. So that's the person I go to when I need to talk, and she tells me stuff that I understand. And that's why I talk to her!

-Wild Kid

From The Beat: It's a great blessing to have a parent with whom you can talk, and you know that they'll understand. What sort of advice does she give you to help you out?

A Lot Of Folks Listen

Yes, I have someone who listens up to me – he is my little cousin or can go to my mom or my best friend. My mom or my family won't judge me.

I have a lot of people who listen to me. When I talk to my cousin we talk about sports and school, we talk about this best NBA player. He loves Jordan and he likes his shoes too. His favorite basketball team is the 76ers and the Lakers.

-Curran

From The Beat: How do you show them appreciation for their open ears? Do you listen to these people in return? What's your favorite NBA player? What's your favorite team?

My Family Listens

The only people that will listen to me is my family members. They give me all the right information and won't judge me if I ask them to.

I usually talk to my grandma and she tells me what she thinks and what I should be doing. I take her advice, mix it with mine, and then make my decision.

-Anonymous Man

From the Beat: How do you show your family appreciation? Does mixing advice do you just?

Listen to Family

the people i listen to
are my mom and dad
and my sister and brother
those are the people i listen to
and i listen to others
in my family too
and that's it

-Marcus

From The Beat: And do they give you good advice? Are you locked up now because you didn't listen to them?

A Lot Of People Listen

I have a lot of people will listen to me, but the person who will listen to me the most is my lady. She listens to me whenever I have something to say. She listens to me 'cause she cares about me so much. I met her the beginning of the school year. I call her from juvenile hall, even though I hate it, 'cause I can't be with her. When I hear her voice it hurts me so bad.

My brother, he listens to me 'cause he knows what I'm going through. He been through the same thing I've been through. He also offers me advice, which helps. He tells me to stay out of trouble and watch my back. He tells me not to trust no one, not even my best friend.

My father, he listens to me too. Even though he's a dope fiend, he cares about me, that's why he listens to me.

In here, The Beat Within listens to me, whatever I have to say. It's important, too, because I'm able to let out my feelings and they give good feedback when you write. That's all I got to say.

-Lil' Augie

From The Beat: It's good that you have so many people to confide in and so many people that confide in you. Who do you confide in when these people aren't around? What makes a good listener? Do you ever feel that if people in the system actually listened to you and your homies, things might be different? Is it hard for you to listen to some people? Who? (The Beat will always listen to you, so keep pouring it out.)

"Listening"

My Listeners

In my whole entire life I have the following people who listen to me. They are my mom, auntie, my homegirl, and my boyfriend.

My mom and my auntie, no matter what, I know they will always be here for me and listen to me.

My bestest homegirl is always there for me through thick and thin. I knew her for eleven years and my boyfriend I have been with him for one year.

I be with him every day since the first day I met him. I am with him every sec., min., and day. He has been there for me and always told me to keep my head up no matter what happens I will pull my heart no matter what happen they gone ride with me till the end.

-Lil' Lynda

From The Beat: It seems like you have a lot of people that care for you. You have a lot of support on your side. You have people that miss you more with everyday that you spend in there. So let the time serve you for something and when you get out focus on spending time with the people that love you and care about you.

Talking to Someone

I have some one to talk to and I do write raps when I feel like it. I talk to my girl friend and my dad.

-Kyle

From The Beat: Do you talk to your dad and girlfriend about the same stuff you write in raps or other stuff?

Listening

I'm blessed to have people listen to my problems. My family has always been there when I'm facing a problem. I can always talk to my family. It's sad cause I only realized this when I got locked up. The only people I can really trust with my problems is my family.

But there is also some things I just can't share with anyone. If I had a person who would just listen to my problems and not judge me, I would share all my problems and ask them for their point of view.

The Beat Within is also a program that listens to our problems and helps us out by giving good advice, so that's another way of someone listening to my problems.

-Abbas

From The Beat: Sometimes it takes for us to be away from something/someone in our lives to realize how important they/it is to us. It's a blessing to have such a caring and concerned family. Who specifically in your family do you talk to? Do you listen to them, too? We're glad we can provide another ear, and we hope you can find that special person you trust enough to confide in and get advice from.

My old lady is the kind of girl who listens to me

Damn! Listening

First off I want to say what's up to all and keep yo' head up. Anyways, when I here "Listening," it hit me hard in my head, like, "Damn! "

I should have listened to my mother because I know she was not saying anything to hurt me in any kind of way. If I would've listened instead of trying to live that fast life, trying to stunt on these rippers, pushing a scraper, and thinking I was doing it. But oh, it's a lot of marks that's listening to me.

My little brother looks up to me. I want to change because when my little nephew comes from out of town, he be like, "Let's go to Joe house," talking about the Hall.

-Lil' Jay

From The Beat: Almost everyone, especially teenagers, gets advice from a parent/ guardian that we don't pay much mind to, until we realize that those words of wisdom could've prevented many of the bad things that happen to us. As young people, we think that adults just want to preach and lecture us, but in reality they just want to prevent us from going through the same things they went through. You're wise if you can learn from your own mistakes, but even wiser if you can learn from the mistakes if others, and avoid making them in your own life!

My Mother

Yes, my mother. I can talk to her about anything.

-Ashton-Adogg

From The Beat: What makes it so easy to talk to your mother?

Listening To This

If I could be the man, everybody would be listenin' to me or what I got to say. I ain't talking about ruling the world, I'm just talking about listening to all my problems.

See, I know I'm young and hifey, but that don't mean shhh to nobody. I done been shot three times and was out cold with no help. But gettin' shot ain't the reason. Try having one lung, one kidney, and a damaged liver.

But man, you know what, I ain't never call on no one but my mama. That's why when I got shot she came to the scene and she was getting ugly up in here.

Hey, but I'm not the one for this shhh 'cause this jail place ain't for me. But I ain't gone trip 'cause I get out in about one more week, and when I go home, I ain't never coming back. You see.

-Lil' Day-Day

From The Beat: Well, we hear that promise a lot ("I ain't never coming back,") but actions speak louder than words. What is your plan for never coming back? Will it require you to sacrifice some of things you like doing in order to stay out of place you hate being in? Like what?

People Do Listen

Yes I got someone like that — my mom and sometimes my dad if he's not taking care of business. Those are the people I talk to about that and I'll tell them about school and other stuff that is going on with me.

And it's bad that I'm always getting an attitude problem.

-Dude

From The Beat: Family connection is a plus. It sounds as if your parents and you can communicate on an understanding level, but you feel that your attitude always interferes. Of course that's going to happen, you're not alone. It's a parent and child thing. It always works itself out. As long as you can keep it at a certain level of understanding where you don't go crazy on your parents — you will be aight.

My little brother looks up to me.

My Uncle Listens

Yes, I have someone who listens to me. That person would be my uncle. I can go to him for anything.

I know whatever I ask or tell him, he won't judge me at all. I have done some very messed up things to some messed-up people. And the only person that knows about it, is my uncle!

Some people know what I'm talking about, some people don't. but there are a couple of homeboys from the 'hood that I could go to and talk to.

If I need some advice or something, I will go to one of the older homies. And I know none of the homies would judge me, because they got too much "respect" for the homeboys. One love and I'm out.

-Lil' Spanky

From The Beat: But can a homeboy advise you to change? Do you know any homeboys who respect you for yourself over and above your affiliation? 'Cause if you continue to bang for a prison gang, you'll end up banging in prison, man. Can your uncle see that? Would you hear it if he said it?

The Kind of Girl

My old lady is the kind of girl who listens to me and helps me out when I need help. She doesn't judge me by the actions I make. She looks deeper than that. That's why I care for her.

And she's so nice! She's so hard to get mad at — sometimes I just want to let all my frustration out on her, but I can't. 'Cause I know in the long run, she's the only one who will always be there to pick me up when I'm down. I love you girl, always and forever.

-Rich

From The Beat: A couple of weeks ago we asked you to tell us more about your girl than how pretty she is. And you just did! She sounds like a treasure beyond measure.

Plenty Listen

I have plenty of people that listen to me, such as my mom, dad, and sis. Me and my sis made a pact that we will trust no one except our mom and dad. I'm not saying I will never trust a soul on the earth but so far I can't.

I love my whole family but some people you just can't trust and that's the whole truth and nothing, but the truth. I really can't trust no one that I'm not related to and that's just it. As far as I'm concerned — everyone judges you no matter who they are. This is how it is and this is how it will be to me.

-Trovey

From The Beat: If you trust no one except your mom and dad then how will you grow? How will you have a relationship with a girlfriend or best friend? Do you think it's easier to have a relationship with people when you have trust or when there's no trust?

Weekly Writings

"Listening"

Mama's Boy

I would go to my mom with my problems, because I know I can trust her.

-Sheldon B1

From The Beat: Sounds like a good person to go to. Are there any other people you trust as much as your mother?

Michael

Michael baby, I love you for listening and all the things that you do. Thank you for being there and helping me through my problems. I can talk to you about anything and you help me try to solve them. You trust me in everything I do. You don't judge me. All you say is, "Smile, everything will be ok."

Boo, I know you say things to make me feel good, and I do things to make you feel wanted. But to tell you the truth, you ain't no sucka for nothing. You know that's why I call you B.B., Bad Boy, Bru Bru. I know me and you will stay in love and always be together no matter what you do.

One love baby Bru Bru. I love and care about yo' bad ass too.

-Ballin' Queen GU

From The Beat: It's really important to have someone you trust enough to tell your problems to — especially someone who listens and helps you through them. How long have you and Michael been together? How did you meet? Is he locked up or free? How will you make sure that you and he can stay together instead of having to write about him from behind these walls?

Listen And Live

Listen, then you will live longer.
When I feel weak I get stronger.
I don't listen to nobody. You can't tell me nothing
If you still doing something.
Yeah, I do what I got to do.
Stay down and remain true.
I did a lot of shhh in my life.
Had a baby and still ain't done right.
My mind is on doing time.
Institutionalized in my mind.
I've been in here stressin'.
I'm leaving on the 29th.
I kind of live in two different worlds.
I give a damn about nothing.
I need to listen to myself.
Stay down. I'm about to do it big,
And stay on top of the world. By myself.
Tiff deserves the best,
So I'ma get the best.
I love myself.
I don't need nobody no more
Me and my daughter about to get further
For real, I don't need nobody no more

-Tiffany GU

From The Beat: We don't know anybody that doesn't need somebody. Human beings are not meant to be isolated. We are communal and social animals, so it's just a question of picking who you want to socialize with. Not giving a damn about anything contradicts loving yourself. You must give a damn about yourself to love yourself, and if you do, then you know you and your daughter will need love, support, care, tenderness and all those other wonderful things that make us human.

Trust No One

Yeah I got a lot of people that will listen ta me, but will they actually care enough or have enough sense to give me a smart response? It's hard to find somebody that will listen an' know that they will not repeat what you say to anybody.

I find it hard because a few times I confided to me brother about problems I was having, and he went back an told my friend what I was talking about. He was the person I thought would always keep shhh to the neck, so from then on, I've chose to keep everything to myself.

-PG B5

From The Beat: Have you ever done what your brother did and betrayed somebody's secret? If you can't confide your secrets to anyone, don't they begin to burden you after a while?

Mom Listens

Yes, I do have someone who I can talk to. I can talk to my mom because she listens to me and what I have to say.

-Tyrone B2

From The Beat: Do you also listen to her and what she has to say?

Listen Up!

Right now the Lakers are losing in the NBA Finals. Me, I'm rooting for the underdogs (The Pistons). I don't know why. I'm just an underdog guy. I like to see the faces when the underdog wins. The other reason is because I'm not a follower.

-Jd B5

From The Beat: Did you make a lot of friends while you were cheering for the Pistons? Do you think of yourself as the underdog?

Her Friendship Means Everything

The person I feel like really listens and I can really trust is my friend Aliscia. Since I been in here, she been like the only person that took the time to write me. A few of my friends wrote me, but it hasn't been consistent, and I really can't trust any of them wit' my true feelings. But wit' her, it's different.

I know I can tell her stuff and she won't tell anyone. That's really important to me 'cause I can't really trust people wit' my feelings. A lot of people have betrayed my trust, and a few times it has led me to getting' into trouble.

If she reads this, I just want to let her know that her friendship means a lot to me. Being able to talk to her has helped me a lot, being able to let out some of this stuff I've been holdin' in fo' so long. I'd probably go crazy in here without being able to talk to anyone about all da stuff dat's been goin' on. And I love her hella much for all the shhh she's done for me.

-Tyree B2

From The Beat: You're lucky, Tyree, to have someone you can share your feelings and secrets with who won't judge you, and who supports you. How long have you and Aliscia been friends? What do you do for her in exchange for all the help she gives you? What kind of advice would she give you now for how to live your life — and how to stay out of here?

Not Listening Led Me Here

I don't listen, I'm not even gone get on this paper and lie, because if I listened I wouldn't be in the predicament I am in right now. I do listen lightweight when my big bra is out.

If my big bra was out before I got wrapped up, I wouldn't be in this place. I'm not saying he always tell me to do the right thing. It's just that he do his crime more organized and smarter than me because my big bra is a banga.

There are a chosen few that I listen to, but I came in here and found out that I was listening to the wrong people. That's why I'm in here. My mom and dad always tried to steer me in the right way, but I didn't listen.

They say if you don't want to listen at home, they will put you in the system and you ain't got no choice but to listen to them. But I am going to end this with another "you know what they say": a hard head makes a soft ass.

-Bear Weezy B2

From The Beat: We're not sure we understand that last saying of yours, except that you have a hard head (we're not commenting on the rest of your anatomy). You say that your big brother is a better criminal than you ("more organized and smarter"), but apparently he wasn't smart enough to stay out of the system either. Instead of learning how to be slicker at what brought you here, why not examine your decisions and choices a little more in depth, and see if you can't come up with a better plan of living free. Then you can be your own "big brother"...

I'd probably go crazy in here without being able to talk to anyone about all the stuff that's been goin' on.

I know you say things to make me feel good, and I do things to make you feel wanted.

Fatherly Advice

One person that listens to me who I can trust, someone who won't judge me, would be my mom's ex-boyfriend because he understands me. When I talk to him about my family, about my life, he tells me right from wrong. He tells me to not follow other people. He tells me to be a role model for my sister because we have no father, and my mom's still doing drugs. So that's the person I can trust and listen to.

-Mike B2

From The Beat: It sounds like he gives you very good advice, especially the part about serving as a role model to your little sister who looks up to you. So, with all the wisdom he's spitting in your direction, how did you end up here? Are you really listening?

Listening

I got a friend who listens to me whenever I call her or write her. I write to her all the time when I got things on my mind to tell her. We stay in touch, so when I get out we can talk about things. In here I ain't got that many things to do, so I tell her my problems and she helps me deal with them.

-Diddy B5

From The Beat: She sounds like a special friend. How long have you known her? Do you ever help her deal with her problems? What does she tell you that helps you?

"Habits"

About Habits

all type of ninjas have habits
some be crack addicts
some be on some other trash
that you can't imagine
some be treatin' they nose
some be pickin' up hoes
some be off them pills
some shoot up big time for real
but me i'm just 'bout my paper
i sold weed coke hop pills boy girl
it hella people wit' habits in this world

-Lil' Dj

From The Beat: Selling all that, just got you here! So why do you think selling illegal drugs is not a bad habit? Seems like you're just as addicted to selling as your customers are to using. Now, you know an addict will lose everything and still not quit — what about you? You won't stop till you drop or stay locked up?

Bad Habits

I have a lot of bad habits, like saying something without thinking about it, or like losing my temper and blaming the world for all my problems. These habits are really hard for me to break.

The good thing is when I realize it is my fault and apologize to the person, but sometimes it's too late. I think over time I'll be able to break these bad habits.

-Abbas

From The Beat: The fact that you recognize these as bad habits — and that you want to break them — puts you well along the way toward accomplishing that goal. Do you think there is a connection between speaking before thinking, losing your temper, or blaming others? Do you think you should be a better listener? How will you go about breaking these habits? What will you work on first?

The cause of all these habits, of course — "friends"

I Have Habits

yes i have habits
i get distracted easily
and sometimes i just zone out
sometimes when i read
i sometimes don't hear stuff
right away i just get
focused on some things
more than others
and less on other stuff
i always am paying more
attention on engines
more than on my chores
at home this is my mom's
biggest complaint that
i spend more time
on engines and bikes
than anything else

-Brent

From The Beat: They did hearing tests on a cat that appeared to hear normally. Then they had a mouse run across its field of vision, and the instruments demonstrated that the sound was no longer being registered by the brain — because it was so focused on that mouse!

My Drug Habit

i have a lot of bad habits
and all of them are hard to break
like my drug habit
i think that out of all of them
this one's gonna be
the hardest to break
i need help to stop
but at the same time
i don't want to stop
sometimes i ask myself
when will i realize
that it's not good for me
probably when it's too late

-Rich

From The Beat: Part of you will always want to use, 'cause you're an addict. You've said so. And an addict will never stop wanting to use, and he will never stop wanting to stop, at the same time! This addict in you who's sick through and through, doesn't care if it's good for you or not; you're just its vehicle to reach the spot. But addicts do recover. Many stop before it kills 'em. Your best hope is to stop asking when and just begin!

I Got This Habit

I have a lot of bad habits, for one — smokin'. I've been smokin' for about five or six years now, three times a week.

I got this habit by hangin' around OG's a lot. That's when I first started. And I quit for about a year, but when I started back — I started smokin' every single day of the week!

And I still have that everyday habit. I'm plannin' on breakin' that habit when I make eighteen years of age.

-Rell-diggidy

From The Beat: You must be giving it a break while you're locked up. Why start again when you make your next move, wherever that might be? Give yourself an early birthday gift and quit!

Decisions

My bad habits are the decisions that I make
'cause it's my fault, feel me?
I make the choice to register it in my head to act a fool
and go dumb.

-Lil' Rocky

From The Beat: How can you work on making better decisions? Right thought + right mind = right intention.

All My Habits

I smoke weed, drink, and occasionally use x. X isn't my problem anymore — after a friend of mine passed I was through with it for good.

Smoking is a little harder to quit, given I started when I was nine, but with the Lord anything is possible, as well as a good group of friends and a strong will power.

Drinking I think will always be in my life, but I would just have to choose not to abuse it, and maybe even wait until I was of legal age. The cause of all these habits, of course — "friends," so-called anyways.

-Ashton-Adogg

From The Beat Within: Peer pressure is something all teens have to deal with at one point or another. Our prayers at The Beat go out to the parents, family, and friends of your homie. We know trying to quit smoking and drinking may sound easy but actually it is a big problem that you have to knock out slowly, one at a time. With time, if you really want to quit it will happen. Until then, be patient and be careful not to do anything to harm your body. That's the only body God's going to give to you unless you're ready for organ transplants!

My Bad Habit

the bad habit i got
is that i always fight
and i always hurt them
as bad as i wanted
but then i start to feel
sorry for them
but that's what i get
for doing that

-Lil' Ferny

From The Beat: Can you take that feeling of remorse — and aim it at the future? Every fight you avoid, spells: success!

Violated Curfew

My bad habit is not going home when I'm supposed to, and that is why I'm in the Hall now — I violated my home supe'.

I'm going to get released on EM, and this time I am going to break that habit. I won't violate my curfew. I will go in when I'm supposed to.

-Charé

From The Beat: It would be a shame to lose your freedom over something so simple. Make getting home on a time a habit. Even when you're off EM, it will help you stay free!

Smoking Weed

my bad habit is smoking weed
for some reason i can't stop
i try and try but i just gotta
hit the blunt all the time
it relaxes my mind
it stops me from stressing
and from thinking too hard
when i don't smoke for a long time
my mouth waters every time i smell it
when i smell it i get happy
i'm mad it puts a smile on my face

-Lil' Aj

From The Beat: It's called self-medicating, but you already see the problem — you've become so dependent on it that you don't feel okay without it. Plus it's illegal! And it affects your memory and thought process, which is all bad for schoolwork. There are medicines that can be prescribed by a doctor to relieve anxiety, and keep you clear-headed at the same time.

On My Mind...

Yes, I have some bad habits: smoking weed and drinking — but I can stop at any time.

But on the one side, I want to smoke and drink to take all this nonsense off my mind because I have a lot on my mind out there on the outs.

-Shannon

From The Beat: How can you deal with your stress in a different way? If you turn to the bottle every time stress pops up — you might be in some big trouble one day.

it hella people wit' habits in this world

"Habits"

Losing Control

Shhh, I got a lot of bad habits, but the one that gets me in trouble the most is my temper. The first time I came to the Hall is because of my temper.

Some kids from this gang were trying to pick on my lil' cousin, so me and my big brother walked down the street to school to see what's up. When we got there, we found my cousin and we asked him where these cats where at. When we found them by the steps, they were ten deep, but me and my brother were cool for the moment.

The next thing you know, they start acting tough because they're in front of everybody, so my brother took off first, then me, but after they got dropped, me and my brother were so mad, he turned around and dropped the principal and me. I turned around and dropped the vice principal.

To make a long story short, I got expelled and it was my first year at that school, plus it was only the second month and I got sent to the Hall. Now, though, I've been learning to keep my temper down because one screw up and I'm going to get reprimanded. Let's get a shout out to all the USOs locked down. Stay up and don't let the system get you down. Gone.

-Big Samoa

From The Beat: It's not bad to have a temper 'cause we all have tempers. It's all about how you control your temper. In this life, people are gonna run their mouths and there's nothing you can do about it. If you react — it will only hurt you even more. Can you keep your temper from going off the hook when you are released?

Very Bad Habit

My bad habit is just carrying a pistol because of the funk I got on the streets. I feel I got a bad habit because I wake up every morning and got to wake up my 9, 45, 40 Cal, or 38...

-Kudah black

From The Beat: Have you ever thought that the reason you carry a pistol is because you're afraid? You don't want to live your life always looking over you shoulder. Guns were made to kill people. Real men fight and live to see another day. Real men know how to take an ass whooping. Real men know how to lose. Real men don't wanna die. Good thing you know your bad habit exists. How can you get rid of this bad habit that'll only bring you more grief if it hasn't already.

My Bad Routine

I have a couple of bad habits, some of them are like smoking, not being responsible enough, acting before I think. These are things that go on in my every day life. People make choices every day and I make a lot of bad ones. That's where acting before thinking comes in.

For example, if I get in a fight I wouldn't think about the consequences, I just act. As for smoking I plan to quit because it has got me in a lot of problems. Even though I make bad choices sometimes I hope in the future I'll be more responsible for my life.

-Gina

From The Beat: Everybody makes mistakes! Nobody is perfect. It's good that you recognize that the choices you are making are bad choices. It is now up to you to try and learn from your mistakes so you won't make them that often or better not at all. We know you could slip but that doesn't mean that you can't get up. Hint: Try learning from other people's mistakes also it will help you learn a lot and you will see the consequences for their actions without you having to experience it for yourself.

I've been learning to keep my temper down because one screw up and I'm going to get reprimanded

Extremely Bad Habits

What's crackulating, this Yung Lazy from Newark. My bad habits are ridin' shotgun when the homie cops a stolo. Every time he come through with a new ride, I be like, "Naw, I ain't ridin' around this time." But then he be like let's just ride around the corner to see what the homies is doing.

But, then, we end up riding through Newark, Hayward, Decoto, and Fremont, just hittin' beer runs and searching for our rivals.

Then, we got like ten minutes to make it back to Camp, so he drops me off at the pad. I take a shower, buy a burrito, and meet back up with the homie at Camp, hella perving.

-Yung Lazy

From The Beat: It sounds like you are going through what most teens go through which is peer-pressure. Sometimes, it takes for us to separate ourselves from the people we're closest to (family and friends) in order for us to do what's best for our future and us. When did you take up this bad habit? When will you put an end to this bad habit? What will it take? Further incarceration????

Do You Have Any Bad Habits?

We all have bad habits.
Some of my bad habits consist of...
rebellion, drinking, smoking, and back talking.
I picked up my habits from my neighborhood lifestyle,
but was it my fault for being influenced by this?
I am positive. I am done with these habits.
When I get out, my support system is fairly strong,
so it would be tough for me not to succeed
and end up failing.

-Ace

From The Beat: Keep yo' head up and stick to your word. About your neighborhood having influence over you — how can you have some control over your situation so you know what you're getting yourself into? Do you have hobbies that you enjoy which you can turn to instead of drinking, smoking, and back talking?

Influence

I have a very bad habit of letting people influence me — that's why I'm here right now. I let my so-called friends talk me into something stupid.

Now I'm up in here tripping about what's going to happen to me. Yes, I want to break this habit because look where it got me. I need to be my own person and don't let suckers run my life. I run my own life.

-Daniel

From The Beat: You have to ask yourself this question: am I a follower or a leader? Leaders take control of their own lives and followers follow the next person. It sounds like you want to be a leader. How can make your own decisions and not let anyone influence you. People who don't respect your decisions are not the people you want to be surrounded by.

My bad habits are ridin' shotgun when the homie cops a stolo

Some Habits

Well, what's up Beat? This be "Green Eyes" 'bout to tell you some of my habits! So, check it out!

Well, my first habit is gangbangin'! That's a habit that I will always have, no matter what, because in the life of bangin' I live is my family!

Another one of my habits is smashin' in stolo's! I'd go pick up the homie Lazy, but sometimes he'd be spooked to ride, but I'll tell him, "Let's just smash around the corner." But then we end up goin' to Hayward for a minute.

Then, we go to Newark and see what's up with them females. Other than that, I am out.

-Green Eyes

From The Beat: Those two habits might land you some serious incarceration time with gang enhancements. You could get washed homie! How about picking up some new habits before it gets to be too late!

Good And Bad

I have good habits and bad habits. One of my bad habits is that I wake up late in the mornings and I'm always late to wherever I gotta go, or be, if it ain't important. I got a habit of always messin' with different females all at one time, but I know every person up in here has, or once had, that habit.

I have a habit of hustlin' because I've been hustlin' all my life. Even when I was young I used to hustle candy, steal dogs and sell 'em, but that was when I was a little kid. I don't do that anymore. I had a habit of grindin', but I can't anymore because I'm locked up now.

-Lil' John

From The Beat: Hustling is not always bad! It's what you are hustling and the purpose your hustling that makes it morally right or wrong. Have you tried putting your hustling skills towards something positive like a legal job or a hobby? As far as your other bad habits, do you plan to discontinue them any time soon? When you get out, will you continue to grind? Why or why not?

"Habits"

Them Habits

I got some bad habits. Smokin' weed, poppin' pills. Shhh, what can a ninja do? I know, smoke some more, pop some more. Screw it!

-Noriega B5

From The Beat: If your decision is to do more weed and more pills, then why do you call them "bad" habits? Sounds like you think they're good habits. Can a bad habit be good sometimes? Can a good habit be bad sometimes? Tell us the "good" and the "bad" about a weed and pill habit.

Spending A Fortune

I got a few bad habits. One of them habits is smoking weed. I started smoking weed off just seeing my uncle hit a blunt. From there, I wish I could take that back, because if I didn't smoke I would have a lot of money right now.

Tha other habit is gambling and that's a real bad habit.

-Bear Weezy B2

From The Beat: So if you didn't smoke you would have more money to gamble, and if you didn't gamble you would be rollin' in bread. Funny how much the little money we spend day in and day out amounts to when we really do the math. Obviously, the loss of money hasn't stopped you from smoking or gambling, so how are you going to stop these habits when you are back out again?

Not Good

My bad habits is picking up guns, being on the run, and being on the block, 'cause somebody can get popped.

-Lil Clap B1

From The Beat: What are you going to do to change these habits? Do you want to change them? That "somebody" that might get popped could be you!

Bad Habits

My bad habits are being outside too long. That's how I get in trouble. The kind of trouble I be getting in is robbing people, smoking blunt after blunt, and drinking everything I can get my hands on.

I miss my mom. I think all this is a waste of time. I think I'm going to change myself.

-Jordan B2

From The Beat: Let's get this straight: you think being here is a waste of time, but smoking blunt after blunt and drinking everything you can get your hands on is not? What is going to be different about you? Being locked up can be a waste of time if you are missing out on something productive, what are you missing out on? How are you going to change yourself? Which do you miss more, your mom or your blunt, your mom or your drank? The answer to that question may well determine whether you can stay out of places like this or just become accustomed to them...

Habits Lead Me Here

One of my bad habits is going to juvi. Another bad habit is smoking weed on probation. Another bad habit is robbing people just because I need the money.

-Dak Mani B2

From The Beat: If you know you will be violated for smoking weed, and get sent back to juvi, why do it? What if everybody every time they felt they needed a little money decided to go out and steal it? How would the world be then? (That money that you "need," are you making it now?) If you continue these habits, you'll find yourself wondering what a life of freedom might have been, since you will be in the deep freeze. Think about what's important to you.

Get Away

What do I need to break my habits? Some trees to calm me down and be coo'? Naw, just get away to somewhere far away from this shady world and be to myself and get my head straight. But I'm 'bout to go away for a while and try to get right.

-Young Cd B5

From The Beat: You've been a presence in B5 for quite a while, and we'll miss you. We hope you write us from ROP and tell us what that looks like. Do what you need to do, and good luck!

if I didn't smoke I would have a lot of money

Bad Habits

Hey, Beat Within. Yeah, I have bad habits like fightin' an' sayin' hella shhh to people that I really don't sometimes mean. But I got over it 'cause I ain't really bad...

Be easy 'til the next chapter. That's all I got to say.

-Lil' Lucy GU

From The Beat: Have you ever walked away from a fight? Why do you think you like to fight so much? Do think fighting is a sign of maturity or immaturity? If you had a daughter who got into a lot of fights, what would you advise her?

Locked And Knocked

I got habits with drugs and habits of not going to school,
habits of hanging with the homies acting a fool.
I got habits of getting locked up,
habits of being with girls getting them knocked up.
I got positive and negative habits I wish I could stop it
because all of the bad habits is costing me my freedom.

-Jaydah B5

From The Beat: Aren't some of the "habits" you list — like knocking up your girlfriends — just excuses for choices you make? How do we get the habits we have? Can habits be broken? Can new habits be learned? Will you always have the "habit of getting locked up," or will you find a way to substitute the habit of staying free?

"Weekly Writings"

Just Stay There

It all depends on how you live and if you care about your life. I think if you want to continue doing what you did to get locked up, it wouldn't really matter if you're locked up or not. An older person should really think about his/her future, and not about what they're going to do when they're free again.

Some people really need to grow up. But in some kids it's hard to notice any sign of maturity. Sometimes it's hard to believe that a really immature kid will ever grow up.

-Mature B1

From The Beat: But they do grow up; they have to or else life will pass them by. Getting free again is the future, making plans is important to be successful when they get out. Why do you think people play the role, and act like they are gonna do good, get out and do the same things?

I Gotta Eat

What's up Beat Within, what it do? I'm just going to tell you how I feel. I feel good for a lot of reasons, like I'm alive, because when I was on the outs everything was all bad for me. I had to do a lot of hustling to eat.

-Need Bread B2

From The Beat: Are you making the argument that being in The Halls could be a good thing for you? When you weren't hustling were you trying to find a job, so you wouldn't have to hustle? How will you put food on the table when you get out of here without risking coming back?

Trying To Be Bad

People say they will die, but when it's time to cry they try to act like they're bad, but on the inside they're sad 'cause they're trying to be bad.

-Lil Clap B1

From The Beat: Why do you think youngsters want to act like they're bad? What's the point in perpetrating? Stay on the porch, right?

Self- Discipline

Poppin' pills is a bad habit that I need to get rid of. Stay from around exo pills, and just discipline myself not to use pills.

-Mitchell B2

From The Beat: Do you think you can impose this discipline on yourself, or do you need a supportive group to help you? We find it's always easier to do something that's hard when you're doing it with others. So, if you hang around exo poppers, you'll probably be doing it too. If you hang around people who are trying to quit (or have never done it), it'll be that much easier for you to stop.

Weekly Writings

Lover Boy

What is love? Do you have a girl that you love so much that you cry? Well, that's how I feel about this girl on the outs? Her name is Julia. She is so fine that I miss her so much. I can't stop thinking about her. I miss her so much, and I love her, but she's my girl.

-Ricky B1

From The Beat: What are the things you like about this girl besides being fine? When you get out how are you going to make sure that you don't get separated from her again?

To The Folks In The Halls

Man, stay up and shake them haters off, get up out of here, and do the damn thang, be cool and stay out of this hole.

I might be out of here in July, or if not I'm going to the grouper for one year. But it's nothing. I'm gone knock that out. I'll be back in 2005 of June. This is from Lil' Lloyd. What it do?

-Young Lloyd B1

From The Beat: Why do so many youngsters locked up like you say, "it's nothing"? When does nothing become something?

It's Not A Game

I'm tired of this life. I'm tired of tryin' to survive the life I'm livin' right now. I know I can never win.

You come up for a minute, but get caught later. One minute you riding with a mean mug, later you dead, shot or stabbed, all over, nothing. Some being over money, power and respect. Others is tha block, colors and sex.

I'm going to keep it real. This is some of the stuff everybody going through because we wasn't livin' in the house with both parents.

But to keep it real, I'm kinda glad I'm in here and getting' sent to ROP. It's a reality check in some way. I'm going to get mines together. But the question is, are you going to get yours together while you got a chance to?

-Cecil B4

From The Beat: Do you think the variable in why some young people in the 'hood manage to go to school, have strong relationships, succeed in a legit way is the presence of parents in the home? What do you think would have been the most important thing to have in your life that would have kept you out of here?

Good Words

I can trust my cousin, over anybody I think. I can tell him anything, and know my words are good with him.

-Mitchell B2

From The Beat: Where is your cousin now? What does s/he tell you about being in the Hall?

Played Or Playing?

I want to get out of The Halls, and smoke some purple kush, and I want to see my girlfriend. The judge keeps playing me because I was supposed to get out yesterday. I feel like they are planning on keeping me for the summer, all because I missed a couple days of school.

-Aaron B2

From The Beat: The judge isn't playing you, you played yourself. No one told you to miss those days at school. If you get out and you're still on paperwork, then go smoke. That's just another violation, and another time you'll be playing yourself.

It Ain't Free

Nothing is free, not even freedom. When you get out of The Halls, you still have to buy for yourself. You can't always depend on mom or some girl. One day you have to be independent.

-Lil' Carl B2

From The Beat: We agree with you, as you'll see if you read the Editor's Note in Volume 9.23.

Who Cares

Who cares about us out here? I don't know. Mom say she do, but if she did, I will not be in here.

But who cares? Dad? Yeah, he might if he ever been there.

So who cares? Grandma. She show all she can, but who cares?

My ninjas on the block always seem to be there when we got beef. They ride, so who cares?

-Lil' Dakota B4

From The Beat: This is one of the most important questions to ask. What we see is a lot of folks saying they care, but very few doing anything about it. The system cares by locking kids up. The state cares by cheating poor schools out of money and resources, while building more prisons. Too many families care by abandoning their children, or teaching them the hustle. The president cares by lying, "Leave no child behind" while he cuts services to families and children, leaving millions behind. In other words, the only person you can count on to care is yourself. Do you care?

The Wrong Crowd

Man, I can't wait to get out of here. They accused me of putting my hands on someone, but I didn't touch no one. I regret hanging with the people I was with.

-Maurice B2

From The Beat: Are you going to hang with the same crowd when you get out? How can you pick friends who won't lead you here?

My Date

Tomorrow I've got court, and I don't know what they're going to say, but I've been waiting to go back for a while now. But whatever they say, I'll be ready to deal with it 'cause it's nothin'.

-P-Hop B2

From The Beat: We don't think you really are ready to deal with "it" if you think "it" is nothing. You'll truly be ready when you realize that your life is something, and that turning it over to some other person to tell you how to live (in other words, becoming a slave) is more than nothing.

"Rap" Lil' Daddy

Lil' daddy just let me know
Dat you creepin and sneakin'
Don't do it behind my back
Boy I know that you cheatin'
Just holla at yo' girl
Put me on that you leavin'
'Cause I know that you got a date
With lil' mama this evenin'
Lil' daddy
Let me know now
Boy I know that you foul
'Cause I can tell by you style
Dat you little buck wild
Got me stressin' like a dog
If you care less
I don't get upset
Got yo' phone
Turned off
Claimin' you getting some rest
I know in my right mind
That you got some sex
Every time you touch my hand
Rub on mine they sweat
I see you shakin' like a leaf
From yo' fast heartbeat
And when you come home to me
You go straight to sleep
Oh, I forgot, you just comin'
From a late night creep.

-Young Shay GU

From The Beat: Sounds to us like you better dump this lil' daddy for someone who treats you with more respect. What do you look for in a boyfriend? Are looks more important than character? What do you think boys look for in a girlfriend? What's your best quality?

Keep It Up

They tell us to keep it up and we'll stay locked up.
They tell us to keep it up and we'll be dead.
They tell us to keep it up and we'll do more drugs.
They tell us to keep it up and we'll be on our way to the pen.
They tell us to keep it up so we keep it up the only way we know how,
and that's by doing all the things they don't want us to do.

-Lil' Dakota B4

From The Beat: If you only know how to keep it up by doing the things you know, the things that got you here, then perhaps the instruction should be to start up something new, to change those things you've been keeping up. Do you think that you do the things "they don't want (you) to do" just because "they" tell you to keep it up? The point is, whatever "they" say, it is your life, and you have choices to make in how (and where) you want to live it.

Love

Love is a strong word and it's powerful. I'm deep in love with this guy who doesn't trust me anymore. He believes I cheated on him, but I never did.

I tried to talk to him but he doesn't want to listen. He flirts with females in front of me to make me mad, but I act like I don't care.

Yeah, Freddy, I'm talking about you. But you know what? Your true love is locked up waiting to see where they're gonna place her at. I'ma see you when I touch down.

-Alicia GU

From The Beat: You nailed it in your first sentence: Love is powerful, and it has the power to create and to destroy. If trust does not exist, how can love thrive? Do you trust Freddy more than he trusts you, or do you think he's cheated? In any case, we hope you focus on what's important at this moment, which is following through on your placement, doing your program, and getting out of the system.

To My Ex-Boyfriend

Hey friend, what's up wit' you? Me, just sittin' in here doin' nothin' but writin' to the Beat Within.

Me and KFC has been goin' with each other for a few months. I've been stressin' hella much 'cause I've only been here 45 days, an it ain't even cool.

Yeah, but my baby has been wondering what's goin' on with me, sayin' you goin' do somethin' to me 'cause I killed your baby. Well, what you don't know is that I was not goin' to keep no baby 'cause I was a baby myself.

When you went away I felt so bad I just had to do what I did to your ex-girlfriend.

Well now me KFC has our ups and downs, but we still be pullin' together. Oh yeah, she said holla at her. So till the next chapter.

-Lil' Lucy GU

From The Beat: We're not sure if you're talking about having had an abortion or something else. But it makes us ask this question: why do you think so many young boys and young girls (your age) fail to take precautions when they get physically intimate? There are so many good reasons to protect yourself (unwanted pregnancy is just one), we can't really understand why you wouldn't take advantage of readily available methods (some for boys, some for girls). Can you explain it?

Well, what you don't know is that I was not goin' to keep no baby 'cause I was a baby myself.

Stress

Stress is an enemy of mine. I don't like it and it don't like me. It tried to destroy me, but I won't let it. So I got something to say to stress: kiss my behind! I distract it by reading, or the only other thing I can do to distract it, I will exercise.

-Marvin B5

From The Beat: We wish you would spend a little time exploring and explaining what you write. For example, in this piece you say you read and exercise to displace stress, but what do you read? How often do you exercise, and what exercises do you do? How well do these strategies work? When you feel stress, how does it manifest itself — stomach ache? Headache? Anger? Are you able to talk about it with anyone? If so, who? If not, what's it like to keep all that inside? Come on Marvin, open up a little bit.

Freedom Ain't Faulty

I honestly don't think that freedom is faulty, bein' locked up is. You have to listen to what staff say like when to go in yo' room, whether or not somebody is goin to blind-side you. I don't know, but that's what I consider to be faulty to my family.

Keep y'all heads up. I love you. Just stay strong to my Big Cutie Glenn. Glenn watch over us, especially yo' brother!

-Cudabeez B5

From The Beat: The question wasn't whether freedom is faulty or not, but whether our attitudes toward freedom are faulty or not. For example, we read a lot of pieces that tell us the writer thinks that everything will be all right once he is on the outs, as if he won't face everyday problems, pressures and pain. We know otherwise, and so do you. That's what we were hoping you'd write about.

A Faulty Paradise

I'm just waitin' to see what's the deal wit' this 707 court date. If I don't beat my 707 court date, then I'm gon' ask to be transferred to 850. But if I do beat it, then I'm gonna take it to trial.

The DA just want to send me straight to adult jail, but my lawyer fightin' the. They tryin' hit me off wit' 15 - 25. If they charge me as a minor, then the max probably will be seven years in the "Y."

I hope fo' the best, but expect the worst, because they tryna say that my background is all grimy and shhh.

But I'm gon touch down one day. If I do lose both ways, then I'm gon do my time. But when I get out ninjas better move or something, 'cause I'm goin reach out and touch a few people. All because they made me end up in a faulty paradise and away from my family. All over a misunderstanding, But until then I'm still in a faulty paradise.

-Young Fatz B5

From The Beat: So you're facing a possible fifteen years behind bars, or more, and you're already planning your revenge when you hit the outs some time in the future? Doesn't sound too smart to us. Actually, we allowed you to vent your frustration in The Beat about reaching out and touching a few people because we think that's all it is, venting. You have time (whatever the outcome of your case) to think about the foolishness of such a course of action — unless, of course, you like the security of being locked up. Oh, and by the way, we hope you beat your 707 hearing.

To My Baby

How are you doin' on the outs wit'out me? I love you. I just want you to know that.

Well, I might do several months in Euclid or whatever. But you can come see me when my mother comes. Babe, tell your mom I said hi, an' I love her and kiss lil' bra for me.

K- Kind in all the right places
A- Athlete in playin' basketball wanna be in the WNBA
R- Rough when we play, fight an' stuff like that
R- Responsible for doing what you said you will do
I- Intelligent in your schoolwork, etc.
S- Sweet 'cause when I'm down, you bring me up
M- Mailing the letters you write
A- African Queen is always there when I need her to be there when I need her to be there

Love will always be wit' me. Be easy.

-Lil' Lucy GU

From The Beat: How long have you and your "Baby" been together? What makes this person so special?

Outta YGC To ROP

You know dis me, Young CD. What's up wit' tha, Beat? Me? 'Bout to leave and go do my time and get back, feel me? Come back, finish school and do it B-I-G. You know it's nothin' to a YG.

RIP big bra. It's a shame I got another ninja gone, but I gotta stand tall and keep my back against da wall, you know? To all my real ninjas, stand tall and don't sell yo' side to the system, na'mean?

-Young Cd B5

From The Beat: If your readers (your students) were just young kids, would you tell them "it's nothing to a YG?" We know you can do the program, and we hope you can get maximum benefits out of it to apply to that "come back" life you described. But, to keep it real, it's more than nothin'. It's somethin'!

To My Coco Puff

I'm feelin yo' shape
I'm feellin yo' eyes
A portrait of you gave me belief of love at first sight
If loving you is wrong
I still think it's right
Baby girl you play an important roll in my life
Just the sight of yo' smile makes me tingle inside
You gone be in my heart till the day I die
I love a woman that's built like you
So much, to where I don't know what I might do
Those lips, eyes, breast, thighs, are so delightful
And me I'm rightfully yours
You're rightfully mine
We go together till the end of time

-Yogi B5

From The Beat: Do you think we can learn anything about you by your description of what you like about your girl — lips, eyes, breast, thighs? What about brain? Mind? Character? Soul? How much should those things count? Since you didn't mention them in your poem, what can you tell us about them? Is physical beauty all that matters?

No Safe Place

Check me out. Everywhere you be at is faulty 'cause nowhere is safe for a young brotha. Nowadays ninjas is getting' killed like nothing, and it ain't coo' at all.

I'm outta here to ROP and handle my beney, but nowhere is safe. Any time could be yo' time to go, so don't get caught slippin'.

-Young CD B5

From The Beat: We had to take out one of your paragraphs because it read too much like a threat, and that's not what The Beat is for. Are you doing anything to stop the killing? Can anything be done?

Juvenile Versus Adult System

I ain't feelin' it today. I just heard from one of my homies that my patna in crime just got out a couple of days ago. We went down for the same thing, and he only did a couple of months in the adult system, up in county jail. But I'm in here still, and they trying to send me to YA!

This got me really heated. I mean, I'm happy for my homie and all, but I'm just mad at the system. How they do us in Juvie and how they get off if you're eighteen and older. Well, I'm out y'all. Stay up. Peace.

-Oso B5

From The Beat: We feel your frustration in this piece, Oso, and we can't disagree with you. But don't fall for the idea that the adult system is easy or fair. Your homie may be free (and we're happy for him), but we know too many people locked up for too many years in too many prisons to believe "they get off" when they're older.

Sometimes

Sometimes I don't understand why the judges just judge us by our case. I'm a straight up Latina coming from the barrio were it's hard to survive. I ran from my group home like a few weeks ago, and when I came here my PO is trying to send me to another group home.

The only thing on his mind is Colorado. I'm hella mad because he hasn't tried to send me to another group home. The only thing on his mind is Colorado. I'm not mad that I'ma go. All I'm scared of is not getting accepted. I'm not trying to go to CYA.

I just pray to God that everything will be fine, and to have God on my side. I go to court tomorrow. I just hope they put me in another group home, not Colorado. This is my first time running from a group home.

To my brother Tyree, I love you and I'm sorry if I let you down. Just do your program and be on top of your shhh. I'm out.

-Alicia GU

From The Beat: How can we let those judges know what your life is like outside of the case you caught? Should judges have to spend a week, a month or a year living in the barrio to understand it? If you were the judge, what would you do in your case? Is your objection to Colorado based on how far it is from home, or something else? If you end up there, we hope you give it a decent chance. Who knows, you might like it!

This Ain't For Mika

My name is Lamika, but people call me Mika. I am in the hall for petty theft. I don't need to be in here. I am getting into it with girls in here.

I really want for God to send my PO to come and send me home. I would love to go. I have been in here for two weeks. Man, this ain't for Mika.

God will bless me because I need Him in my life. Man, I sat on my bed thinking about my life and how I will keep going and not go back to the past. I want to see my family and friends, my Boo, too. I know he is thinking about me.

No more smoking for me when I get out. This ain't no game. I am true to the game.

-Lamika GU

From The Beat: How can you be "true to the game" and true to God at the same time? You ask God for the blessing of being sent home, but what is God asking of you? And what are you giving to Him? There's an old saying, "God helps those who help themselves." How are you helping yourself? You may not need to be here (who does?), but if you were the judge and Mika came before you, how would you handle her case?

Waitin' To Leave

What's up Beat Within? Me? Just in here waitin' on me to leave. Well yeah I have people who listen to me, like my mom, KFC. Someone know who he is.

Yeah, I got people who don't judge me about what I do. I got hella ninja that be listening to me an' shhh.

So till the next chapter, be easy.

-Lil' Lucy GU

From The Beat: While you're waiting to leave, are you planning your life, step by step, so that you won't have to come back here? If not, if you're just waiting for "things to happen," you'll be back!

I Ain't Missing Nothing

all i hear is i want to get out in the summer
'cause being in this place is a real bummer
but to be a real ninja ain't missing nothing but bullets flyin'
ain't missing nothing but homies dyin'
ain't missing nothing but being on the block
ain't missing nothing but ninjas getting shot
poppin' them thangs going dumb you ain't gon' win
but in the bible it says you end how you begin
so keep that in mind when you do what you do my friend

-Lil' Paul

From The Beat: So use this time to get your mind right, and when you get home — act right. Go to school every day, stay off the spot at night; then when bullets fly you won't be nearby.

A Motha's Love!

My mom has always warned me about following my dad's footsteps because my dad was, and (I don't know about now), is a big drug smoker and dealer. So my mom left his ass, and ever since I was a lil' kid, about 9, she always warned me because I always go to stores and start stealing, doing drugs, and drinking alcohol.

She will always know because almost every mother knows their son. It doesn't matter what you on but your mom will find out. She caught me drunk and on crystal meth. She said, "Your better watch the shhh you're doing 'cause you're gonna become just like your dad, in and out of jail." But I always never care what she said.

But if I could go back into time I wish I could've listened to my Latina Queen and never did the shhh I've been doing. But damn, I'm where my mom said I would have been if I wouldn't change my ways. Damn I'm stupid.

-Culero

From The Beat: You are so right! In most cases, there's no love like a mother's love because hers is unconditional. It sounds like you have a very caring mother who is very concerned about your future. Take her advice now — it's not too late — and try to break the cycle of self-destruction from your father. You're not stupid, just young. Our parents seem like the stupid ones when we're young, and then suddenly they get a lot of wisdom — as we become mature enough to recognize it. Now that you recognize it, it's up to you to do something about it.

The Streets

the streets are rough
you got to be tough
if you don't have a gun
you got to run
ninjas don't fight no more
all they do is pop people
it's rough in these streets
if you don't be careful
you going to feel the heat

-Lil' Suave

From The Beat: If you grind on the spot, you'll feel heat whether you're "careful" or not. And if you believe a gun will keep you safe, you're headed for the pen' or an early grave.

Up In Here

a ninja in jail hella mad
looking at my ninja travis
here looking hella sad
man up in here i can't do it
my close friend over in another unit
and another friend of mine hella tall
if one of them ninjas hit him
i just know he gon' fall —
still another friend serving time
'cause he dropped three dimes
then my bruh bruh just went
to camp for jackin' rims
an' anotha potna on the town
wit' a warrant so he's goin' down
but we all will be okay
'cause we will get out one day
and then we'll be out to stay
one more thing i need to say
rest in peace lil' jay-jay
coke-smoke sam rev tank
greedy and freaky-freddy

-Davon

From The Beat: We printed the names of the dead out of respect, but we cut names from your rhymes 'cause it read like a straight turf call. And if you really want to be okay when you get out, you'll need to change what you're all about.

Oakland

i'm from the streets
that's where i got my money
i would be on my block
all the time
and if you'd come to my spot
you'd have to get in line
behind my knocks

-Lil' Suave

From The Beat: It's not so suave to serve time for serving dimes. And this is just a taste of the waste of a life of crime.

Court Date

What's up? This is Young Chango. It's been hella stressful in this ditch of a Hall.

When I go to court on June twenty-first, I pray to God that I can get out. And if I do get out on then, I won't come back to the Hall ever.

To all, stay up and keep your head up. Stay up and keep it coo'.

-Young Chango

From The Beat: Saying you won't come back isn't enough to keep you out. What will you do and what will you not do, in order to insure you stay free? Fail to plan, and you plan to fail.

I am going to do my program and I am not going to run

I pray to God that I can get out.

I'm Out to a Group Home

This is Chucky, back in this place! But I am going to a group home in Fremont to do eight months.

To my brother Gato in Camp, stay up. And to my dad, stay up. We will all see each other again soon.

Well, anyway, today is June fifteenth, and my PO came today and told me, "What group home you want to go to?" And I told her that I want to go to a group home in Fremont so I can be near my family.

I tried to go to Camp, but she said no. I wanted to go to stay with the homies up there, but she said there are too many of us from the same place up there.

Well, Gato, I just read your letter for The Beat. Right on! And don't trip, 'cause I am going to do my program and I am not going to run. Well, take care. To all, one love. I am out.

-Chucky

From The Beat: We're glad you got to go to a group home near your family. It's not likely to happen again like that, so just as you say — don't run! Do your program and go home. And stop hanging on the block with that same crowd that's either locked up or about to be. On the real, it's better to be free.

LOVE

this is what i need
i keep it like a bird with seeds
baby my whole world is all about you
if only we get together
one and one will make two
girl you need me
i can see it in your eyes
if i don't have you with me
baby my heart dies
when i think about you
i want to make you mine
i look at your picture
and i always say *girl you fine*
if you would be with me
you'll be stuck in fame
and since i love you so much
girl i'll take all your blame
i thank god
for sending you from above
i have only one thing to say
keep in the love

-Bilal

From The Beat: Taking the blame is one way to show love, but living a life without blame and sharing that path, will lift you both above this sad time of incarceration and separation.

Get Home Homies

What's up. All y'all stay up and do your time. All y'all moms want you back home. Then you can chill with the homies on the outs.

Some of y'all know me, but some don't — 'cause I'm new to Juvenile Hall. Maybe we can kick it when we all get home. And maybe you know my brother, Lewis. Peace out.

-Mousy

From The Beat: We'd say most of your readers have been here more than once. If you don't want to come back again, don't go out of your way to kick it with these knuckleheads on the outs.

Family First

What's up, man? It's yo' boy Lil' Jason in max. I went to court on the tenth. The judge told me that he wants to give me more charges. He said I will be going to a group home, so this might be my last time writing to you before I go.

I just want to say thank you to the staff in max. Before I go, again I just want to say to The Beat Within that I love y'all and I will not be coming back.

-Jason

From The Beat: Congratulations! We hope that this time you'll make the right decisions and get your life back on track so that this will be your last time. Try to find something constructive to do with you time, even if it means changing people and places you hang around. We enjoyed hearing from you! Stay encouraged and out of trouble.

My Toughest Situation

Today, I just received news that I will be incarcerated for several more months, something makes me so hella mad. I didn't even commit a crime, yet I've been punished beyond belief, taking all the living life out of my spirit, draining all of my joy and stuck with my heartache.

The anger is more then anger, it's rage. I want to murder everybody, then kill myself. However, if I act on this, life in prison is my future. Yet, I have to suppress this anger so I can live without fear of falling into a deep hole forever.

I am stuck, yet I must make the best of it. I have been in jail damn near one month, and four months to go for no crime, just a damn placement. Jail, detention, juvenile hall is punishment, not what they say it is, a playground. This is not my playground, not without no sex, no weed, no alcohol, no family, no friends, no joy, just a deep sorrow.

I feel like killing myself, yet do not have enough energy to do it. I was blessed with freedom for only five days. I messed up so bad that I can't say nothing, but my life sucks.

Blessed with all this beauty, talent, and charisma, but can't even share it with a woman of my dreams. Fantasy tricks my heart and mind. All I can think about is sex, lust, desire, obsession with the female. To be so tormented with this unseen dream, to feel a woman's lips pressed against mine, that makes my heart skip a beat.

I have to be stuck in jail, do their time to make the best out of it. I have to learn to focus on all types of knowledge, study, get so fit that my body can't take no more muscle. I will start today by practicing meditation or working out 'til I pass out. It will be hated, but I must stay focused on my goal of freedom, not get stuck in the mindset of hell.

I will get in shape, the best shape in my life, physically and spiritually. The road will be hard, but a way.

-Jeremy

From The Beat: We had a hard time reading all of this, Jeremy, but what we could read we like. (We know we made some mistakes, but we hope you cut us some slack...) We understand the obsession with women because at your age, we were also obsessed! It's just one more thing to think about as you focus on your goal of freedom and make your body and mind strong; and it should be a powerful reason, once you're on the outs, to keep you there! Keep working on your writing, it's getting better and better.

It's Hard

It's hard when you got a criminal mind
and the devil always telling you to commit some crimes
Chop down bundles and split some dimes Sniff some lines
Blow up stuff like mines. Hip, keep a clip to mines
Drawin' down don't scare me but four walls
will have me actin' scary
talking to my imaginary friends Bill, Kim, and Larry
On ice with two strikes, why you think they dare me
They say in poker nobody keep the same cards
I want a better hand, just saying,
"Damn it's hard!"

-Dolla Deesa

From The Beat: We're always fascinated with the notion that "the Devil made me do it." The devil made you sniff some lines? Made you commit crimes? Where does the Devil's responsibility end and yours begin? If the Devil is making you do it, maybe the Devil's opposite put you here to think about how you might stand up and say, "Go back to hell; I'm now taking orders from Heaven!"

To The One I Love

This is dedicated to the one I love
I don't know if she came from earth or the heaven above
I just thank God that he sent her love
to me
She's the stars, the moon and the sky
The way I love her makes my heart cry
I know she loves me the same way too
Life without her I don't think I can do
For her I'm fiending
Without her by my side life holds no meaning
If I can't be with her then the clouds and the day will vanish and the stars and night will fall
I'll spend my last hour with her if God was giving me my last call
The way I love her I can't express
Mega, Baby, I love you — I had to get this off my chest

-Ft-John

From The Beat: You say that you can't express the way you love her, but we think you did a fine job of expressing it! Of course, love is one of those things that words can't do justice, so we feel you. What would she say if she read your poem?

**I can't take this anymore
a staff be poppin' open cans
of Pedigree
and whippin' them up and
callin' it a cheeseburger**

Getting Washed

I been here for three months for a dope case and a warrant, but they dropped the dope case and they didn't find it on me and my PO is still trying to send me to the Y.

I've been going to court back and forth for nothing. I only got three cases — two dope cases and one burglary, but what they're really trying send me to the Y is for not staying in a placement 'cause I always run but hopefully I don't go 'cause they tryna wash me. But anyways...

RIP JJ, Greedy, JuJu, Criddy-Bo, Ant, and my two dead auntie's and plenty mo'.

-Lil' G

From The Beat: What do you think about all this? How do you see things? What do you think should be done with you? Think about what you done and figure out if you are your where at because of your own actions or because of other reasons. But remember, after the rain — there's always a sun.

What Girls Like

Girls like guys who adore them. This is the number one thing for girls. Many girls have fallen in love with a guy after he announces that he likes her. The more you like her the better (unless it is overbearing).

Girls like guys who are strong. They like guys who are confident and give them the feeling that they are safe when they are around them.

Girls like guys who aren't afraid to say sweet things to them. "You look so pretty tonight," stuff like that.

Girls like guys who don't shy away from them when their buddies are around.

Girls like guys who know how to have fun when they are with a girl(besides being physical).

-Lil' Shawn

From The Beat: Well, Shawn, if you're an expert in what girls like, we wonder if some girl will take on the challenge of writing what boys like... We don't disagree with your analysis, but we wonder what you think girls think about other qualities, like honesty and character. Oh yeah, and what about good looks? What role do they play in what girls like? What do girls like about you? What do you like about them?

Paradise Lost

i can only realize
that my freedom is a paradise
i got so caught up in paradise
that i lost it
i know my freedom is not
completely gone
i am going to have to pay
for my so-called paradise
i am just glad that my paradise
is not so far gone
that i will never get it back
for one thing i know
i need my freedom back

-David

From The Beat: And you will get your so-called paradise back! But to stay free, you will need to accept responsibility for what you choose. And that's freedom, too. Stay strong, choose right over wrong. 'Cause a fool's paradise will never last long.

**i need my
freedom
back**

I Can't Take It Anymore

Hold up wait why am I back up in the Hall
starring at these four damn county walls
wearing all these dirty heffas draws
I can't take this anymore
a staff be poppin' open cans of Pedigree
and whippin' them up and callin' it a cheeseburger
fittin' us up in some pink tee shirts
blue pants and Velcro's
can't take this shhh no mo.

-Lil' One

From The Beat: You can't take it, but that doesn't mean that you ain't gon' ever make it, up out these Halls. You can go home and eat whatever you like and wear whichever kind of draws. And think next time when you are in a tight situation or a bad spot, it's your choice if you really wanna come back or not.

The Outs Is A Faulty Paradise

I think I would rather be on the outs, because I have more things to do and my time would be occupied. Being locked up is hard and you don't do a lot that you do on the outs but the good thing about it is that you feel secured, without worrying that someone might come in here shooting or harming another detainee.

The other good thing about being locked up is you don't get on that much trouble. But I would pick freedom over being in locked up. But being secure is all that matters.

-Frances

From The Beat: We think almost anyone would prefer to be on the outs. But we hope that you don't go back on the outs and keep doing what you were doing that was bringing you back here. Can you find security on the outs? We wish you the best.

About the Hall

i hate this place
i mean y'all don't feel me
words can't express
how i feel about this place
this is the closest words can get
to how i feel about this place
forget this ditch and whoever made it
straight up and down forget all them
ninjas that helped make this place
if i knew the owner he'd be a goner
on my mama that's how i feel about the hall
forget it straight up and down

-Lil' T

From The Beat: You need to own up to your part in putting yourself in a place you hate so much. This place is messed up, but you're the maker of your fate. Up to now, you're the one who keeps bringing you to this sorry place. Change! It's not too late.

drugs only lead to violence or catching another case.

My Hard Life

used to wear a jimmie cap like a beanie
caught no virus like the h i v in me
killin' me killin' me flash me in the back
got me like a sucka just like that
naw i'm just kiddin' it ain't really like that

-Lil' Z

From The Beat: Think like a survivor not a victim. With a doctor's medication, you can keep on living. People can live with HIV. It's not the killer it used to be. If this is a joke, it's not funny though.

Nothin' Important

We're watchin' the game, (Lakers vs. Pistons), and the Lakers are getting whooped. The counselors were so mad that they turned off the TV, so now we're writing for The Beat Within. I ain't got nothin' to write about, and I know if you are reading this, you're probably bored.

So, to The Beat, go ahead, and put this in the back of the book since it ain't interesting for y'all. We're up here in max, bored out of our minds on this hot, sunny day. I feel that I should be on the outs', chillin', posted up, doing my thang, chillin' and listenin' to KMEL in our rooms.

-Lil' John

From The Beat: Anything that's appropriate that you write is interesting to us (even if it's in the back). However, we would hope our dedication to being there to listen to you every week isn't being taken for granted. We would like to think that our program is more important than a game of basketball. What so attractive about watching a game in there? Does it take you out of there for a minute? Would you have been watching the game if you were on the outs?

Pissed Off

I don't feel like doing any work today because I am pissed off.

-Dauenber

From The Beat: Take a break and go back to what you were doing when you're ready.

Heading For A Haircut

The first thing I am going to do when I get is go to the barbershop. After that, I'm going to go buy some more shoes and clothes. Then, I'm going to the auction to buy a van to travel in.

After all that I'm going to get my cousin and four females an go to Las Vegas, Chicago, Miami, an Louisiana for a couple months just to get out the town and then come back make so ore money and go to some more different states.

I want to explore life and experience the better part of life before my day comes when I have to leave this earth.

-Anthony

From The Beat: Traveling is always a good thing. It's therapeutic! Take yo' time and be smart when you're out with your cousin and the party crew. But we are curious to know, how are you going to get the cheese to cop hella shoes and a van so fast? We hope it has nothing to do with the friends you're taking to Vegas. Life does have more to offer and we are happy to hear you're intrigued to find out. We hope you do it in a legit manner.

What A Day It Was

Today was the day of happiness
Today was the day I was happy again
This day wasn't like any other day
What made this day so different
I lost every thing I had and loved
What made this day so happy was it began

-Kyshawnda

From The Beat: Interesting poem. Do you have mixed feelings about the way the day went? Do you think that you learned something from that day? Is it a day you'll never forget? We hope that you didn't lose everything you had and loved forever?

I'm Tired

I can't stand this place no more
I'm tired of looking at the same four walls.
I feel like I'm some where out of town
missin' my man thinking if he's still down.
I'm gonna go dumb when I get release
when I violate I'm gonna say "don't take me in please".

-Kb

From The Beat: When you get out we suggest you try to go straight. 'Cause you already know what happens when you on probation and you violate. You ain't got time to play. You can make mistakes but try not to take serious falls, 'cause we don't wanna see you go back and stare at the same four walls.

Downside To Freedom

The only downside to freedom are doing drugs, gangs, money, friends, drama, girls, and catching another case. When you are finally free, you will stay out of trouble for a while and then you will start doing drugs again. Then, it will start all over again.

I think drugs are the key way to get you caught up again. Drugs will make you feel good and high for a little while, but when that high goes away, you will be addicted, especially during the weekend. You will want drugs, but drugs only lead to violence or catching another case.

One of my neighbors went to a group home for about three years because he robbed his neighbor for more than 50 handguns, rifles, and shotguns. When he got out, he lasted about three months and then he went back.

-Anonymous Man

From The Beat: What do you think draws people to drugs in the first place? Do you think different people are drawn to drugs for different reasons? Did you catch your case while you were under the influence? With all this knowledge about drugs, will you be staying away from them?

More Appreciative

I think if we get out of here Juvenile Hall will be freer than staying in, but we still aren't free. But we do prefer to be out of here than in here because I never experienced anything like this.

So since I came here, I became more appreciative.

-Kyle

From The Beat: You see the light homie! Now all you have to do is follow it. Why do you not feel free on the outside world? If you can make a change in society, what would be one thing you would like to change?

I Love You

i love a pontiac
'cause it feel cool
and i'm going to get one
when i get old
i love to burn rubber
in a pontiac you feel

-Maurice

From The Beat: Go legit and don't quit. Stack your rack and buy yourself a Pontiac. Then stay free as you're meant to be!

People That Care

Folks have people that care about them. I have a lot of people that care about me. I have my family, my lady, my boys, etc. Hella people care about me.

I just don't want to do anything that might hurt them, but the thing that gets me is "we could buy our way out of jail, but we can't buy our freedom." We are free when we came into this world. The people that need to be locked up are the ones who were selling slaves.

People that talk about "God Bless America" were the ones that kidnapped lil' Black people. Those are the people that need to be in jail. Now, these people talkin' about they care about blacks, I respect them that helped my people to escape.

-Jb

From The Beat: Slavery ended a long time ago and the people who sold slaves a long time ago are all dead by now. What do you think Kanye West meant when he said, "We buy our way out of jail, but we can't buy freedom." What makes you trip off that line in his song?

Downside Of The Outs

On the outside, there are a lot of ways that you can get killed and stay in some mess, even if it is not your fault. Just walking into the wrong 'hood and you're from the other side will get you killed.

There is many downsides to being on the outs, but I still would prefer being on the outs instead of locked up.

-Shannon

From The Beat: Do you know how to make the outs a safer place? How can you make the best of the outs?

My Favorite Team

My favorite NBA team would always be the Lakers. It doesn't matter if they win or lose this championship, as long as they try their best — it's cool with me, but to all you Laker —haters, forget y'all.

-Lil' Carlos

From The Beat: Why do you like the Lakers so much? Eve nwith out their coah, Phil Jackson, and now Shaq wants out!? Look for Sactown!

To Job Corps

I hope I don't come back to this place. I want to start my life. I want to start working and getting my money.

I need to control myself when I get out, and start listening to my mother and obeying her rules. I want to have a wife and family, and I want to put my kids in college and make them do something with their lives.

I wish I'd stayed in school! Now I got to go through more school just to catch up. But I'm going to Job Corps after the eighteenth! I hope I do good, so I can support myself — and later, my family.

-Eric

From The Beat: It sounds like you have a lot of hard work ahead of you, but it's exciting, too, because this really is the start of your adult life. Your dreams are good ones; hold them tight! Get yourself under control — and follow your dreams!

Safer In Jail

Sometimes it can be a setup. Like, some ninjas come to jail and that's where they might be safer than if they was in the streets. Somebody might be out to get them and they could be wrapped up if they wouldn't have come up in here, so most feel safe.

Then, when most get out and try to be cool, they still end up gettin' wrapped up. It's not only their fault, it's the predicament they were forced into.

-Lil' Rocky

From The Beat: What can you do to make your life on the outs a safer place to live? How can you keep yourself out of being forced into any faulty predicaments?

Green Eyes' Situation

What's up Beat? This be Green Eyes. I am writing to just say why I have not come to the last two Beat Within classes! It's because someone was speakin' on me sayin' I am the one runnin' thangs over here in max! So, the staff was lookin' for anything to lock me up for! So, they caught me slippin'!

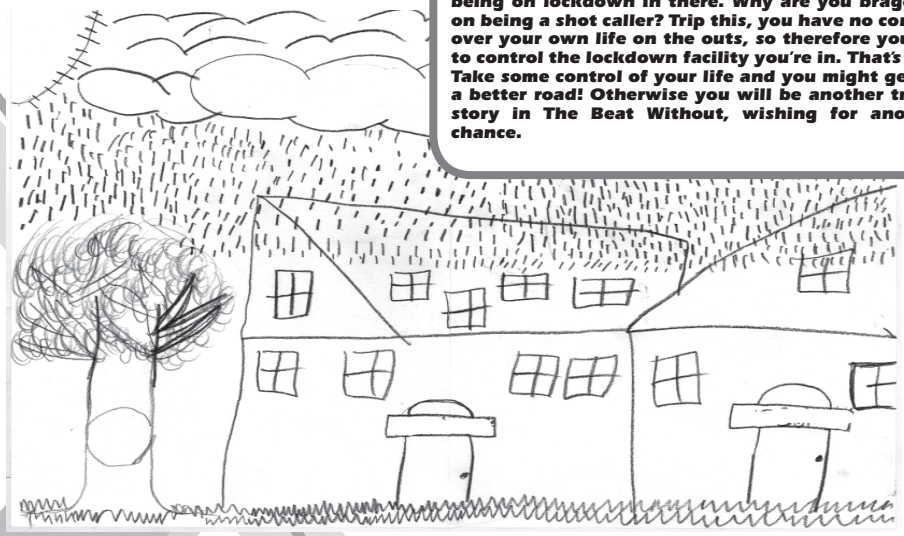
The reason I am writing this now is because I just got my pencil back today because I was on a four-day lockdown from the 9th to the 12th. I only came out my room 20 minutes a day to shower. That ain't nothin' to me, tho'. I've been locked down longer than that before!

But now that I am off lockdown, I got to stay on my toes because people speakin' on me! I think the reason that staff locked me down is because one of the homies took flight on some foo', and the staff thinks that it was me. I am out!

One love!

-Green Eyes

From The Beat: Green Eyes, we have to check you. It sounds like you are talking about the SHU and being on lockdown in there. Why are you bragging on being a shot caller? Trip this, you have no control over your own life on the outs, so therefore you try to control the lockdown facility you're in. That's sad. Take some control of your life and you might get on a better road! Otherwise you will be another tragic story in The Beat Without, wishing for another chance.



Thinkin' About Ya

It must get hectic every time I'm next to ya
and I don't mean to be sweatin' ya,
But girl, deep down in my heart, you know I'm lovin' ya
Ya don't know how bad I wanna touch ya
but I can't from here.
How did I end up in here?
You know, you stay on my mind
and I can't wait for us to be spendin' time.
You've been mine
and I can't see ya' runnin' off no other way.
I know you feel that way
too
but I can't wait to hold ya close and tight.
Just close ya' eyes.
I'll show you right,
but I guess I'll see you in my dreams.
Then, I'm all excited 'cause I'm callin' you this evenin'…
But, who do we blame?
It's a shame, shame, shame,
but I'm willin' to do what it takes,
so if it has to be this way,
then I don't need nobody else.
I don't wanna care for nobody else
I'll call you at home
but if ya' parents pick up,
I'll hang up the phone,
so they don't know that we been creepin'.
I just wanna feel ya when I'm near ya.
I can't wait to be to back with ya'
'cause you know we're going to be with each other always
and always!

-Lil' Ray

From The Beat: Damn it sounds like you got it bad, bad, bad, bad for your chick. What are some of your most cherished memories together? What makes this girl special to you? What makes you special to her? How can you maintain a healthy relationship together even from behind the walls?

Problem Child

I got real problems 'cause right now I ain't listenin'! At home, in here, anywhere!

I was born to this world to be a nut like Dennis the Menace. Cross my path and you gone feel the wrath of a menace. But I see you wanna go against the grain and step on my toes, huh? Yeah, I feel you! But you know what, I say you're softer then Charmin tissue Leroy!

I come from the belly of the beast, unlike you, but I've done already figured out your problem! L+7= a square. That's you!

My problem is I'm hungry! I need money. I wasn't blessed to grow up and live with the best of everything, so I gotta get it how I live. Yeah, I'm just saying though, bosses will be bosses, and poodles will be noodles! Rest In Peace Jay-Jay!

-Emmy-Boe

From The Beat: We suppose you're talking about yourself when you say bosses will be bosses. Isn't it amazing how many bosses find themselves, like you, playing the part of the slave, answering to some stranger telling you when to piss, what to wear, how to walk, and who to speak to (that is when talk isn't dead)? If the bosses are locked up and the squares are free, we have no problem knowing which one we want to be…

I'm Gone To the Y

I'ma be leavin' to the "Y' in a week or two, so to all the homies, be coo' and handle your business. Don't ever be "scurred" of nothin' 'cause this whole thing is just a mind game. Don't let it get to you; be strong. Remember….. God will never give us more than we can handle.

No matter what y'all are goin' thru, you gon' make it sooner or later. It may be in some years or sooner, but we're all going to get our freedom someday. They can't hold us down forever.

Oh, and to the homies hatin' 'cause they ain't got a really down female like me… Don't hate on me; go getcha own… Naw, I know it's all jokes, though. I don't take none of it personal. I'm out.

-Lil' Ray

From The Beat: We wish you the best of luck in CYA and we hope that you keep in touch with us. It's been nice having you in our workshops. Never stop writing for you have your own special talented way to express yourself.

I wish I'd stayed in school!

Weekly Writings

The Summer Night's Sky

Lights in the summer night sky
The lights blue, red and green
The night sky shines with silver moonlight
And stars burn with light of unspeakable power
Someone can't explain
We travel far
But life still goes on
We live our lives
'Till they truly end
With the silver moonlight to our backs
And the lights facing death
To the earth
Which never ends

-Jason

From The Beat: Sweet, lovely poem, Jason. You have the soul of a poet. You're also a wonderful artist. Do you miss the summer night's sky? We hope you get out of Juvy soon, so you can see it in all its glory!

My Own Life Is What I Really Need

In am in here for another
Waste of time
And the fault isn't even mine
Just 'cause I know
How to take care of myself
And my mom can't
So I guess
I'll just have to
Till I'm eighteen
To really be free
My own life
Is what I really need

-Gata

From The Beat: What can you do so that Juvy isn't such a waste of time? Can you make your time incarcerated productive? Can you get emancipated and become independent if you feel that you'll do better taking care of yourself on your own?

Why Me?

One of my bad habits is coming in here. I have been coming in here since the year 2000. I am seventeen years old. I was thirteen when I first came here and I have been coming in and out of here since.

I know I need to change, but it is hard to change. Life is not all good. Life has its good times and bad ones. One love.

-Krawlar

From The Beat: Four years of coming in and out of Juvy is a long time, Krawlar. What is going on in your life on the outs that is so compelling, that it keeps you from your freedom? What do you enjoy about life that's legal? What are these bad habits? Are they hurting your life? If so, how do you plan to change them?

Confessions

I don't have much to say
Except that I'm getting out today
Even though my home is not where I'm gonna go
The choices I had left, I couldn't say no
Everything is better than being in here
My pillow won't be wet from my tears
I have a new plan for my life
A different route
No more screams and shouts
Now I have learned my lesson
But it doesn't matter in the end
Because only God knows my true confessions

-Tanya

From The Beat: Where else would you rather go than home? Even though you sound like you don't really want to go home to your family, can you be grateful for a family who wants you home? Someday soon you'll be grown, maybe have your own apartment. What is your new plan for your life? Is it gonna be good?

I Hate This Place

I hate this place.

-Paul

From The Beat:. Do you hate it enough to stay out the next time you're free?

Hard To Stop

I have a lot of bad habits that I should change, but it's hard to stop them.

-Chris

From The Beat: What are those bad habits? Are they hurting your life somehow? What do you enjoy doing that can take you from any bad habits you may have?

Back Again!

Hey, what's up, Beat Within? Well, as you can see, I'm not doing well. I just got locked up yesterday. What sucks about that is that I was only out for like six days. Man, I really miss my two best friends, Rosalia and Veronica, and the rest of my friends. I can't wait until next year when I got to go to school with them all.

Man, I also hella miss my boyfriend, Omar. He has stuck with me through thick and thin.

Anyways, the topic is, what is one of my bad habits? One of my bad habits is biting my nails. I only do that when I know I'm gonna get in trouble for something.

To all my friends and my boyfriend, I love you and I miss you all.

-Nancy

From The Beat: Are your fingernails chewed off now that you're in Juvy? Don't trip though, there are far worse habits than smoking. Sometimes we don't even recognize how we're feeling until we see our emotions in some kind of physical manifestation, like biting our nails, pulling on our ears, twiddling our hair, smoking cigarettes. You're lucky/deserving of having of such a wonderful boyfriend. How does he and how do your friends feel about you being locked up?

Habits

My habits are kicking it with my friends on the block, but what I need to do is stay out of trouble and get on with my life, and go to college. If you stay getting in trouble, you're not going to change, but make your life hard.

-Young Skin

From The Beat: What is your plan for staying out of trouble and making your life easier? Is the prospect of going to college strong enough to make it worth it for you to stay out of trouble?

It's Hard To Stay

One of my bad habits is not being able to stick with something and follow the rules. Whenever things get rough, I always feel the need to run away and not deal with my problems.

It's stupid to run away, because it only makes things worse and you end up with more problems than the ones you ran from. For me, it's really hard to stay and deal with what I need to, but I am slowly learning that I need to. So I won't get in any more trouble.

-Jenny

From The Beat: It can seem easier to run when life gets too heavy and complicated, Jenny. But part of growing up means accepting that you are going to have to take care of yourself soon. That can seem really scary. Do you like and are you proud of your life enough now, so you no longer need to run from it?

A Very Special Person

I have a very special person in my life
Who I confide in
He is mine
He always listens
Even if my words can barely be understood
Through the wall of tears and agony
He stands by me
He always wants me to be happy
He is my best homeboy and the love of my life
He really understands me
And truly knows who I am inside
To my loquito, forever mine

-Sad Eyes

From The Beat: You're really lucky and deserving of having such a loyal homeboy/love, Sad Eyes. Why are you so sad? Is there anything you can do about it, or is it because of something you have no control over? What could make things better for you? Do you eventually want to be Bright Eyes?

I Wasn't Used To The Outs

I have a bad habit — I smoke too much. When I get nervous or anxious, I smoke twice as much than I normally do.

I honestly don't listen to my mom when she tells me what to do. I have a problem with trusting people, so I don't confide in almost nobody.

In past experiences, as soon as I got out, I went straight back to my shhh. I think since I was locked up for such a long period of time, that I wasn't used to the outs.

-Audrey

From The Beat: What happened when you got out, that you went straight back to your old stuff, Audrey? What surprised you, what scared you on the outs that you weren't ready for? What makes you feel secure on the outs? If you don't trust people right away, can you wait when you meet people, maybe watch them, until you see if they're trustworthy? Then confide something non-crucial, to see what happens? Maybe there are people you can trust. What can you do while you're locked up so that you will be ready for the outs?

CHUNKY ***We met Chunky, when he was in Marin Juvenile Hall. Now he's been transferred to ROP in San Andreas, California. He sends us great romantic, funny, sometimes very sad stories, often dramas from his own life. Here's Chunky's short story about how his lady, Alexis and he met. He hopes you like it. So do we.***

Alexis

The Phone Call
It was 9:30 in the morning when I decided to call my potna, Chino...
Ring...ring...ring...
Chino: Who is this?
Chunky: It's me, ninj, you still not up?
Chino: Hell, naw, but now I am. Why?
Chunky: Nothin', just tryna get a rental and you know Ashley party is tonight.
Chino: Oh, yeah, fo' sho'. What time you comin' to get me?
Chunky: Well, I'm going to take a shower, get dressed and I will be on my way in fifteen minutes.
Chino: All right, Well, I'm going to get dressed.
Chunky: Late.
Chino: Late.

I get to his house
Knock, knock, knock
Chino: Who is it?
Chunky: It's me. Who do you think?
Chino: Hold up. Let me grab my "coat."

We get to the mall
Chunky: What store you wanna go to first?
Chino: Let's hit up Sheiks.
Chunky: I'm wit' it.
Chino: How does this look? Cool?
Chunky: Yeah, it's all right. But I want to get Avirexd up.
Chino: Look at that breezy right thurrr!
Chunky: Yeah, she is thick and she look coo!
Chino: Go holla!
Chunky: Fo' sho'!
Chino: Aye, lil' mama. What's up? My name is Chunky and how are you doing today?
Alexis: My name is Alexis and I'm coo!
Chunky: Do you have a boyfriend?
Alexis: No.
Chunky: Why?
Alexis: 'Cause I'm looking for that special one.
Chunky: Maybe I'm him!
Alexis: Maybe!
Chunky: Who's this?
Alexis: Oh, my bad. This my girl, Sophia!
Sophia: So what's up wit' your potna?
Chunky: Nothing, just over there chillin'. Why?
Sophia: Because I think he's cute.
Chunky: Hey, Chino, come here!
Chino: What's up?
Chunky: Her potna wants to talk to you!
Chino? How you doin'?
Sophia: I'm coo! How are you?
Chino: Well, I'm fine.
Chunky: Well, we know this female who is having a party. Wanna come?
Sophia and Alexis: What time?
Chino: About 10:00, but you know people don't starts showing up 'til later.
Alexis: Well, we gotta ride.
Chunky: Well, we will come get you. We got a rental.
Sophia: Like dat?
Chino: Like dat.
Chunky: So give me y'all number and we will call you and pick you up when y'all are ready.
Alexis and Sophia: Coo. (510) 867-9309.
Chino: So is it official?
Sophia and Alexis: Hell, yeah.
Alexis: You betta call, too. I'm tryna kick it.
Chino: We is!

We wave them off and go to Ashley party
Chino: Man, it's crackin'. I see some cuties and big booties.
Chunky: Man, you hella ugly.
Hino: Man, see you. I'm 'bout to go dance.
Chunky: Holla!

Chunky: Chino is dancin' on the floor with a cutie and I see a cool-looking female. To tell you the truth, all my life I have been going with carmel and light-skinned females, but I see a chocolate girl who looks like a snicker, so I wanna holla.
Chunky: Hey, cutie! Wanna dance?
Traci: Yeah.

Chunky: So we grindin' on the dance floor. So I get her number, but I never did call her.
Chino: Call 'um.

Ring, ring, ring.
Alexis: Hello?
Chunky: What's up?
Alexis: Who is this?
Chunky: Your best friend you met today.
Alexis: What's up?
Chunky: You ready to kick it?
Alexis: We got to get ready.
Chunky: How long?
Alexis: Around thirty minutes.
Chunky: Give me the directions.
Alexis: We get on the freeway going towards Oakland. Get off at the street called Potrero Ave, #10. Call when you get outside.

Chunky: Okay, so we leave to go pick them up.
Ring, ring, ring.
Chino: We outside.
Chino: We get in the car and we head back to hotel. We turn on the radio and listen to Kanye West, "All Falls Down."

Chunky: Chino and Sophia be feeling on each other, huggin' and kissin'.
Alexis: Can y'all slow down?
Sophia: Let's stop at the store and get some drank.
Chunky: COD.

Chino: We get some Alize and Henn.
Chunky: Damn, girl, you hella twisted.
Chino: She like that Monica video," She So 'Gone.'"
Alexis: I wanna do something right now.
Chunky: That's that alcohol talking.
Alexis: No, that me talking.
Sophia: Chino, let's go to the other room.
Chino: I don't think I can get up right now.
Sophia: Come on!
Alexis: Now that they are gone, we can really talk.
Chunky: Yeah.
Alexis: You my ninja now.
Chunky: Like that?
Alexis: Like that.

Chunky: So little mama started rubbing and kissing on me.
Alexis: You got protection? No glove, no love.
Chunky: Yeah, I got one.
Alexis: Take it out!
Chunky: Damn, girl, you are aggressive.
Alexis: I'm a freak.
Chunky: I can tell.
Chunky: To make a long story short, we did our little sexual healing. Me and her are still together, but Chino and Sophia broke up, because he was cheating on her, but they're still friends. Well, that's my story of how me and my girl met. I hope you liked it.

The Beat With Out

MARCUS MONTGOMERY ***If there was a hall of fame for writers who once started in The Beat workshops and have continued, upon their departure, to touch us with thoughtful compositions, this next writer, our old friend Marcus Montgomery would be a shoe in! Marcus, known to many old time readers as Socratise the Scholar is back with one hell of a story, that speaks volumes in regards to many of you in the system, being accused of a crime you did not do. Marcus has been out of the loop for a minute, but from the sound of his most recent letter he's back with plenty of food to share us readers. We first met Marcus when he was a major, major contributor in both max units in Alameda County Juvenile Hall aka 150. Today Marcus writes us from Pelican Bay State Prison. We can't wait to hear more from this very thoughtful young man.***

The American Way, The Way Things Are

If I catch the right angle while looking out of my cell I can see a patch of blue sky, and by this miracle of God that we call light I judge the time until I die.

I am unheard of in many ways and the road in life that I traveled was short to say the least. All due to false accusations and felonious claims, my life was aborted. No one knows I exist, but correctional officers, tier tenders and MTA's (nurses), and they're only brought around to make sure that you stay alive until judgment day. Yet, I still cling to life at the age of fifty-four, and I've come to the shocking realization that it matters not what you want in life, but what you got and how you use it.

I was arrested in 1968 when I was just eighteen years of age. I was walking home from a Panther rally, when on the street I was met with police rage. They beat me with their batons on the scene and called me nigger, boy and every other offensive term used to refer to a Black man by those who think that they're God's gift to mankind then they took me downtown and put me in a line-up that was lily White, needless to say I was the only Black present.

Next thing I knew they took me away and charged me with murder, mayhem, and rape, accompanies by special circumstances. It was kind of like crossing the tape at the end of a marathon, I knew I was finished.

I was tired and convicted on witness testimony, and on testimony alone I was found guilty by a jury of my so-called peers. No physical evidence was presented because there was none, so in all actuality I was the one who got raped in the long-run, because they didn't care if I did it or not, they had a Black scape goat and that was good enough for them.

I was innocent but no one heard my plea. Even my family believed that I was guilty and quickly left my corner, less shame be brought upon the family name. I was sentenced to death and sent to San Quentin State Prison and it's at that same place that I spent the next 36 years.

It turns out that the witnesses that I listed were never called and my where-a-bouts had never been questioned, because I was already presumed to be guilty. The facts stand to say that the public defender thought so too. The woman in the case came to court and testified swearing to God almighty that I was the one that broke into her home, killed her husband, and raped her.

I reside in East Block 3rd tier, bayside - death row, and I've been here for thirty-six years. It was at my current age of 54 that I would die. Two days ago the warden, the associate warden, a captain, and a chaplain visited my cell and informed me that in the next twenty-four hours the judgment brought against me would be carried out. I wasn't surprised, wasn't scared, and I had lost the ability to cry over twenty years ago. I had no one to contact, no friends or family who cared, and my parents passed away many years ago. I had nothing left to do but die.

When asked what I might like for my last meal I replied by requesting a can of tobacco and lighter and to be left alone until my final hour.

I was then read section 3349, article 7.5 of the California Code of Regulations Title 15, and was informed that I, the condemned inmate, had a choice on how I was to end my life. After that the warden handed me a California Department of Corrections 1801 form, which he said I was suppose to sign and make know by which way I wanted to die, by gas chamber or lethal injection.

I knew I was innocent and by no means would I sit here and help them conspire as to the way that they were going to kill me. I spit on the warden, spit on his form, and tossed it out of my cell. Slowly but surely the next day came. All normal movement and program was suspended throughout the whole prison and I was escorted from my cell down to the oldest section of the prison.

It looked mid-evil merged with modern technology, but this area's purpose was not to be taken lightly. I was placed in a holding cell (death cell) at six thirty that morning. Shortly after, a chaplain was dispatched to my cell, but I immediately dismissed him, because if there was a God to which one prayed to, for some reason he had turned his back on me long ago, and besides I don't need a liaison to secure my spirituality anyway.

I figured this would be a quick procedure, so at two o'clock in the afternoon I started to get anxious, not to die, but to find out what was going on. I got my answer when I heard multiple footsteps coming down the corridor. I assumed it was my time, I felt as if all the blood left my body and I had ascended into a state of nothingness.

Four people appeared in front of the holding cell. The warden, the chaplain, a man who announced that he was a lawyer, and strangely enough a man who I knew only too well from newspapers and politics, a man who's office I had written too many times in the past for clemency, to no avail, the Governor of California, Arnold Schwarzenegger. I knew it would only be minutes now.

The words that came out of the governor's mouth next, would forever stay imprinted in my memory. Governor Schwarzenegger said, "Due too the new common use of technology in the field of deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA), it was found that my blood and semen was not the evidence that was collected from the scene of the crime 36 years ago, and that it belonged to a Caucasian man who was currently incarcerated in Folsom State Prison for robbery and home invasion."

He said that I owed this lift of fate to the very woman that got on the stand and testified against me 36 years ago. Upon hearing that my execution was up and coming, she came clean to the DA's office claiming that she couldn't bare to see me die for something I didn't do. I was at a loss for words.

It turns out that thirty-six years ago a White man had broken into a White residence, killed a man, and repeatedly raped and sodomized the man's wife for two hours before leaving through a window. Fate found me walking down that very same street after she had called the police - there were no words to describe the feelings that flowed through me at that moment. The governor declared that by the powers vested in him I was declared innocent and all charges against me were expunged. He then wished me Godspeed and walked away.

I was escorted unshackled by the warden himself from the depths of hell and straight to receiving and releasing where I was given a razor, a bar of Irish Spring soap, a stick of deodorant, a haircut, an expensive Armani suit, and an envelope which contained one thousand dollars and a California ID card. I was told to shower, shave, and dress and be ready for my official release from prison.

I did so in what seemed like seconds and then I was escorted up through the courtyard past the notorious

MARCUS MONTGOMERY (CONT.)

Adjustment Center and out through visiting. When I emerged there was a black Lincoln stretch limousine waiting for me, I turned around and looking at the exterior walls of the place that had held me prisoner for the past 36 years, I shedded tears for the first time in almost twenty years.

The chauffer opened the rear door and I got in to be greeted by the lawyer who had visited me earlier at my death cell. He introduced himself and began a long dissertation on how I had come to be released. He then notified me that I had been awarded an immediate settlement by the state for 10.5 million dollars for punitive damages. He gave me an envelope that he said contained an apology from the woman who had accused me falsely years ago. I rolled down the window as we crossed the Golden Gate Bridge and let her apology float to the ocean below where it belonged.

The lawyers then informed me that there would be a press conference in one hour on the steps of City Hall in San Francisco, where I could speak and answer questions.

I had been booked reservations at the Drake Saint Francis Hotel where he said I would stay until all my financial matters were settled, and then I was free to go my own way a very rich man.

When we reached Civic Center in the city, we got out and were escorted to the steps of City Hall. In the plaza thousands of people had gathered. I was led to a podium and told that the mike was mine. I stood there and collected myself for several moments before I spoke, and this is what I said:

"I never thought that I'd again see the beauty called freedom, that all of you take for granted. For thirty-six years I have been held within the metal and cement walls of hell. In that time I found myself and lost myself at the same time, I lost all sense of religion and I lost all belief that there was a divine deity that created all things good and bad. I lost everything when I lost freedom. How am I supposed to recover from that? The women who accused me in the first place came forward - finally – and told the truth. Am I suppose to thank her for telling a thirty-six year old lie, am I suppose to thank her for taking my life away and then just in the nick of time coming to my rescue, am I suppose to thank the state for making me a millionaire straight out of prison? Who's to say I wouldn't have become a rich man on my own had I stayed free? All my dreams are gone and I can't get those back, who do I thank for that?

I heard that the woman was ordered to pay a five thousand dollar fine for perjury, is that how much it cost now a days for thirty-six years of someone's life, I thought slavery was abolished? There are so many things I can't do now, I can't see the look on my parents face when they find out I'm innocent, because they're dead. Is she gonna apologize for that too?

When I leave here, after today, I don't want to answer any questions, no interviews, none of that stuff, I want to leave the same way I've been for the past three and a half decades - alone. After my affairs are settled I'll be leaving the United States, because I wish no longer to be a slave to it's double standard laws.

I thought one was supposed to be innocent until proven guilty, I guess that was just another pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, right along with the promise of freedom and justice for all."

These are conceived thoughts of a man doing time and are in no way reflective of anyone. I created this story however to paint a picture in the mind of the reader that there could be those of us that are incarcerated who suffer from these very circumstances that my imagination has manifested. If there are those who are in this situation, and I'm sure there are, may God be with them and steady the hands of the executioner, lest they die before their time.

In a constant struggle.

the warden handed me a California Department of Corrections 1801 form, which he said I was suppose to sign and make know by which way I wanted to die, by gas chamber or lethal injection.

BIG O

If we recall correctly this is not the first time Big O has graced the pages of The Beat, with that said, we welcome back Big O who this week delivers a powerful poem titled, "My Enemy," which is himself. Big O writes this poem from a California Department of Correctional facility in San Diego, CA.

My Enemy

It's a trip, who would've known;
that my greatest friend is also my biggest foe!
...Let me take a second to make sense of the question;
how could he be my curse, but also a blessing!
Agony and ecstacy go hand in hand, like me and my enemy.
My nemesis since genesis, we have quite a long history.
I've had many discussions, to show him
that the repercussions, would be counter productive,
if he was to cause my destruction, and of course he agrees, and just when I start to believe, that maybe we can live together in peace,
here he comes again with some type of stupidity!
... It's just insanity, the way he broke up my family,
and is constantly, putting shackles on my feet...
wouldn't you expect, I would just rid myself of this nuisance!
Only if it was as easy as that,
his homicide would be my demise and that's not opinion it's fact.
The pain has been plenty,
tragedies many,
he steals so much yet comes away empty,
damn it, I've just about had it, I just don't understand it!
Why does it seem like his hate is so great.
His habits and schemes, these things...
why can't I just escape?
But let me state the facts of the matter.
The blame is all his!
But, that just makes it all the much sadder.
Because you see, in reality,
I myself am my own worst ... and greatest ... enemy!

EZEQUIEL LOPEZ

Our old friend Ezequiel Lopez the "Good Habit" is back in the pages of The Beat after a long, long hiatus. It is such an honor to have this insightful man share a part of him with us readers. Ezequiel has been a part of The Beat for many years now, if not as a writer, than at least as a reader and in spirit. The good news is he is nearing his parole date, meaning in due time he will get a shot at the free world, and it sounds to us like he is more than determined to stay out. His excerpt from a letter speaks a bit on that as does his incredible poem "Indelible – Psychoneurotic – Psychosis." What can we say about the love poems that follows they too have plenty of meaning as do most. With that said, we welcome back the writings of Ezequiel Lopez who delivers his touch form Mule Creek State Prison in Ione, CA.

An Excerpt From A Letter

I have no desire to return to prison, yet I know my past procedes me. My desire it to help youth, as you all do (at The Beat). I was hoping that once I am released and settled, I could hook up with The Beat in some way. I have some ideas on re-educating youth, and their families. I believe society as a whole has to get involved, It won' be easy, but then what is?

I now understand why people dedicate a life time to a certain cause. I was misled, misguided, and misunderstood. I as many others have, found solace in gang activity. This is not an excuse, just a fact. Something has to be done, there must exist a solution, to enable youth to see, understand, and accept alternatives to gangsterism and street life. If these youth do not leave the street, block, neighborhood etc., they have no concept of life beyond these self-made boundaries. A lot of the youngsters I meet never left their hoods until they were sent to the CYA or prison. Sad, but true.

I've lost anything and everything that ever meant anything to me. I wasn't even around to see my kids grow up. My baby will be twenty-two years old this August. She knows I'm dad, and that's it. I can never repair the damage, but I swear I'll spend the rest of my days being a friend and a father figure, if my children allow me to.

The only game plan I have is to stay out at all cost, even if I have to live with the homeless. I know how to exist on Top Ramen! Ha! Once you've been at the bottom these many years, one can only go up. Least that's the only way I'm going.

Fortunately, I have this one more chance at being on the outside. And hopefully the "Three Strikes" initiative will pass, so that a lot of others in similar situations will also see the outside world again. Existing in here (prison) is not living.

Indelible - Psychoneurotic - Psychosis

Why? I child is born into a poverty and drug monopolized existence. A child is raised in an environment monopolized by illegal activates and gangsterism. A child becomes a youngster at the age of ten. A child gives birth to a child. A youngster is influenced by the homies he idolizes. A love never known is misconstrued in a street gang and enhanced in a crack pipe, meth, or syringe full of heroin. Monopolized, move back six spaces; do not go past go, do not collect two hundred dollars.

A youngster decides to be jumped into a hood, not realizing that from now on, he will never know peace of mind. Always looking over his shoulder, fear of being caught by his rivals, by the K-9; lost in violence, silenced by drugs, shrouded by death. A youngster is witness to the drive-by killing of his family, loved ones, friends. Killing of homeboys and homegirls by their own Raza; not knowing why.

A color, a street, a nationality; misconceived cultural shock, disassociation through ignorance. Introduced to a penal-system, attached to an identification-number, corralled and warehoused. Twenty-first century Holocaust; why? Self-Imposed annihilation; why?

It cannot be expressed enough that re-education, re-introduction, re-birth, are essential in constituting the existence and very essence of a youth's future.

Viewed and reviewed, time and time again; history repeating itself. How long has it been, how long must it be, before the deaf can hear, the blind can see? How does the one reach the alienated mist drenched minds of those that profess to be?

Years lived without life, light viewed through eyes that have known only darkness. Hearts screaming for love, suffocating in aloneness: Why?

Scarred in life forever more, by childish stupidity and ignorance, that pounding of judge's gavel, the sentence of a life-term, death of family while incarcerated, recipient of a dear john by a loved-one; tattooed by the indelible choice you profess to be. Abandoned and deserted by substitutes. Knowing yet not knowing, understanding yet bewildered, accepting yet rejecting. Blind loyalty to a lost cause; seeking refuge from reality, why???

Because of You

Because you are you
I am able to be me
Because you are you
You enable me to be free
Because you are you
You allow me to dream
Because you are you
I can say I love you
But it's not a superficial love
It's a soulful love from deep within
Soul-mates?
I like to think so
Because of you - there is a me...

"Mi Querida Constentida" (My Spoiled Dear)

As I sit in this cage
Within concrete and steel
I want to express to you
This inner turmoil that I feel
It's difficult to express to you
What I want to say
Seems like no matter how I try
The words just get in the way
I sit here in darkness
Surrounded in my loneliness
Where once I held you close
Now you're just a sweet memory
I want to write something special
Meant especially for you
To bring back those sweet memories
And relive those moments we once knew
I have you heavy on my mind
Seems like mostly all the time
But it's only on two occasions
Just everyday and every night
And so my dear
I don't want to bother you
Just wanted to let you know
Que aqui en un rincon de mi corazon
siempre tendras tu lugar
(I want you to know that there will always be a place for you in my heart.)

Relentlessly Shy

Relentlessly in love is how I feel about you
Empowered and shrouded by your love, it's all I can do
The years and time they pass us by
But my love for you keeps burning, my oh my,
So many nights have I dreamed with you
So many days the color of skies so blue,
Why oh why, must it be this way
Just know I'll love you until the day,
Relentlessly in love is how it has to be
For your purpose in life is to be with me,
Although the days they pass us by
On word-currents we'll fly, our love up high,
Stand strong and be at my side
For our love is inevitable, it will never die,
Time will pass, the skies will stay blue
Yes relentlessly in love, is how I feel about you -Shy...

CANDY *We're very glad that Candy, a juvenile locked up in West Durango (Arizona), has found The Beat. Maybe through us, other young people can learn from her downfall due to meth, in particular. This is her third incarceration, and for her, the third time has been the charm. She has made the decision to seek the help she needs, and now waits for a placement that will give it to her. It's not easy, but the path she was on would be infinitely harder. It takes courage to open up as she does here, so give her the respect she's earned and read...*

Hey Beat,

What's up? My name is Candy, and I'm writing you a scenario on the topic "Doing It Over".

I know every teen wishes he/she can do things over, like the first time they took a hit out the pipe, the first time they ran away or whenever they got dumped into the "barrio!" Sure we wish that, but do we really mean it?

I don't know about them, but for me it seems that my life is slowly running out of time. Mistakes that I've done in the past are always gonna be in my present life and future because I know for sure I can never erase them. Now as I sit up in my cell I think, "Dang, I should've never done the things I did".

Your maybe saying, "Get to the point," so let me forward the writing a little. My life as a kid, was great, I had a great family and a great neighborhood. Drugs and gangs weren't a part of my life until I got to the 6th grade. At the time I started doing drugs and started getting faded, and did not care about what others thought about me or said about me. Everyday use of Mary-Jane was a part of my life and that's what got me into my click.

It was only a year ago that I first started living my crazy life. Now I was in seventh grade chilling with a crew I belong to and, of course, getting high. So the years passed by and I was doing the usual, getting kicked out of school and getting into deep trouble. The next year I barely passed the 8th grade, and still did the same things over and over again.

That year is when I started doing that Meth, and life for me was all about that drug. Every day and night I would be with Meth, It was like she were my best friend or something. I did everything with her. The first time I got locked up, and the first time I got put on probation. Like any other teenager, I said I was going to stop, but my hope was real low and it did not happen. Faith was no longer in my vocabulary or in my heart. In and out of the Hall would be my life, and every time I would go in, I would come out with a homie to kick it with on the outs.

But now the 3rd time was my last strike, and that's why I'm still in here. That's' when I did something about myself and decided to get help at a rehab. Days go by as I wait for a bed to be open so I can leave, praying to God to help me because every day slowly I'm getting tired and weak. It's really hard for me to think about the problems I have and the things I did to get them. Trying to forgive myself but deep down I can't, because of all the scars I have.

Yesterday I went to the clinic and they told me I'm in a risk to get cancer because of all the drugs I've done in the past. So what do you think, should I really forgive myself? Because I don't think I can.

Jail Hell

Going through hell when I'm up in this jail
There's nothing to do when I'm up in my cell
Counting the brick walls 1,2,3...
Flashbacks that I have like when I used to smoke G
I'll do good but then I'll go get high
It's hard to say no to the thing I do best in life
Now I'm just chilling on my couch
Waiting for the day that I could get out
So what do you think of my livelihood
Do you think it's good to be up to no good?

DANIEL PIERCE *The Beat moves in mysterious ways. First-time writer Daniel Pierce, AKA Redwood, found a couple of discarded copies on a table in the medium-custody Texas prison he currently finds himself in. From there, he writes us a letter full of praise for The Beat (thanks, Redwood), and a piece called "You Want Game?" which is full of wisdom for Beat readers.*

You Want Game

Remember the game is sweet, but if you lose, it don't owe you nothing. It's a process of overcoming and becoming. It's about Happy Times and Sad Times, and we like to think that happy times are the best. But actually, it's the sad times which allow us to see the true character that dwells in each and every individual.

Become a man because it's more important today than yesterday (You Dig!). It's about changes. Life bring about a change for him or her who's willing to change for the better. Each and every individual is responsible for his own destiny. The choice is yours weather to be Happy, Sad, Mad, or Glad.

Keep the faith Beat readers and all alike and when you rise, "Realize", it's a brand new day for a brand new way. Keep it true to the Brand New Game In You. All praises to the most high.

Dear Beat

Major props to the "editors notes" on issue 8.28 and 8.29 (them are the only volumes I have access to). Y'all are so real, Man. A thanks and shout out to all Beat Staff, co-founders, graphics, web designer, and especially Beat supporters for making this possible.

I'd really, really like to get involved. Would you please allow me? I've got a lot to offer and have plenty more years on my hands. I have been locked up in Texas for six years now. I'm 25 years old and could put some real and significant writing down for our young generation. Yeah, I'm only 25, but you grow up fast in the system.

Anyway, I love to read what The Beat youth and elders and editors have to say, so please allow me to join the family from down in Texas... I got lucky and found these two Beats on a table and haven't came off of them ever since. But I know y'all want me to share the good news, so as soon as I read them again, I'll pass them along.

Yeah, I'm only 25, but you grow up fast in the system.

The Beat With Out

KING YELLA

The young King Yella is back, obviously he's not representing himself with the 150 Crew where he once resided while incarcerated, this time he steps up huge from the CYA's Preston Youth Correctional Facility in Ione, CA. Those of you who have followed King Yella, you definitely know how seriously this young writer takes his writing. Well, with his first contributions as a BWO contributor, he doesn't let us readers down, as he gives us a dose of his life via letter, pieces and poems that follow. Write on King Yella for believing in yourself!

Beat

How's it goin'? Me? I'm cool (at times) I've been messin' up lately probably 'cause moms ain't wrote since I've been here. I try not to think about it and keep all off my mind to stay relaxed but damn, show some support you haven't since I been here mom, ya feel? I mean from parent and teacher conferences to basketball games, nobody ever showed up.

Yeah, though, man, I've been establishing goals t owork forward to and although at times I fall off, it gets easier each week I try.

I've been thinking and this here is now the time for me to make that decision whether I wanna change or die in the game of a negative life. It ain't nothing in this life but two things, quick stress an quick death.

Sorry I ain't been writing but you get one free stamp every month and I been here one month and twenty odd days, so, - I just saw Big Joe a few days ago, he gave me a stamp and a few noodles, so then I started editing my pieces.

I would write again in a few days 'cause that's another month, but my lil' sister's birthday is comin' up, so I'll write in another thirty days or sooner if I can hustle up a stamp.

I gotta go, school time, tell everyone I said "hi!" Man, I miss The Beat, I had pretty low self esteem until I started seein' my name. Well, holla back!

Thanks for being there, The Beat changes people, without it I wouldn't have found me.

Straight Up

Troubled by past mistakes,
trying to keep my head straight,
I'm willin' to do whatever it takes,
I never stopped on the street, so in here they
ain't givin' no breaks,
they're compromisin' my well-being,
flattenin' like pancakes,
it's not the people, it's just these ways that I hate,
I don't know how to draw, still it pictures I paint,
the "clean" clothes are dingy and the "clean"
smell stank,
at six o'clock we wake up
and hit the sack at eight,
between those times, we're out all day,
in here, extra sleep is like pay,
any ward will tell, just ask,
when dealin' with staff,
you're wrong when you're right,
'cause it's whatever they say,
they consider themselves superior than us and
do whatever they may,
this the' world, their laws, our lives,
and their way.
Straight up!

my lil' sister's birthday is comin' up, so I'll write in another thirty days or sooner if I can hustle up a stamp.

Handlin' Problems

stationed between a rock and a hard place
many to hate
no time to waste
every move I made,
I had to calculate
I put my problems in a microwave
and made 'em taste
like cake
ate 'em on a plate
'cause they're hard to shake
impossible to toss away
I deal with 'em runnin' head on
I'm head strong,
possible crisis, recovery long,
takin' chances, shootin' dice, I steady crap,
but keep tryna get back
on my feet,
on my P's, off my sheets,
hit the flo'
At the do'
ready to go,
open one,
open some
life is livin'
problems come,
breathe deep, be calm, don't run
difficulty done.

No Justice

It's no justice behind these walls
Equality is wished by us all
Second to freedom
Trouble-makers?
Nobody needs 'em
That doesn't give peace officers the right to mistreat 'em
Sho' we could write 'em up,
but T-T-S doesn't read 'em.

life is livin' problems come, breathe deep, be calm, don't run

Wildin' Out

I'm fallin' deep into this bottomless pit
wit' nothin' but endless worries and thangs
hard for the brain to cope wit'
it's no one but me to blame
I go through life eager to learn the game
at an early age, runnin' from my past, and police known
by hella names 'cause it's hazardous to portray my status,
my false sense of manifested t ogreed
which explains why I was a hog
fo' sex, money, and weed,
I lived the lost life
fast hustle, got an obligation to bubble
my own family says I am trouble,
though I'm mistaken fo' a dangerous man
I consider myself a youngsta doin' all he can
'cause tomorrow ain't promised to no man.

How It Is

In here they play mind games like kids,
young irresponsible psychologist
whose objective is to toy wit' ya' mind,
searchin' fo' whatever's to find
wit' me I refuse to let 'em cross the line,
some be in everybody's business
I keep myself restricted to mine,
just a tip of how not to catch mo' time,
respect me and I'll respect you,
from the gate it's the unwritten rule,
manipulation and mouthpiece are valuable tools,
gangs try to recruit,
but those that refuse
are little and I'm among that few,
I ain't got time to catch time
fo' a sense of false protection.
I stand alone on ma own
and thank god fo' that blessin',
stay doin' somethin' constructive mixed wit' positive thinkin'
I'm truly learnin' a lesson
readin' books stops me from stressin'.
that's how it is.

KING YELLA (CONT.)

stay doin' somethin'
constructive mixed wit'
positive thinkin'
I'm truly learnin' a lesson

A Brief History

my world, been in a drain,
soaked wet in the steam
my heart is in a glass, heated by boiling water
hardenin' like cream
exterior rock solid
since my younger days
dealt wit' situations in the wrongest ways,
was 'bout whateva' since the first grade,
everybody liked the tutor,
but I was the only one tryin' to do her
spittin' game to her,
thought I had it made
gettin' paid at the age of seven or eight
was proclaimed a boss since the sixth grade
by the twelfth, I was on my way to CYA.

JENNIFER LOPEZ

We are honored to showcase the talents of Jennfier Lopez who writes this powerful poem, "From My Perspective," of how she feels from her cell in the Arizona State Prison Complex Perryville in Goodyear, Arizona. We want to clarify for Jennifer (and others) that The Beat does not have a poetry contest going at this time, and if we could we'd love to give you all money for your efforts, but at this time that is not the case. Our pay day is that your voice is touching many lives young and old. Thanks Jennifer, hope to hear form you again down the road!

The Beat

What's up? I'm writing to ask you if you could enter my poem in your contest. I do not know if it's got to be a specific type that your requesting. If you do print it can you send me a copy, I would love to see it in the Beat. Also, I would like to know if you could send me some more issues of The Beat. I only have issue 9.04. My friend also would like a few issues if possible. We are in the hole here at Arizona State Prison. I wish I was able to share The Beat with others, but we can't pass anything here not even books!

Good looking out, thank you all who make The Beat possible. God bless, I hope you enjoy my poem. Please put it in The Beat.

I wish I was able to share The Beat with others, but we can't pass anything here not even books

it's a mind reminiscing
on memories
that slowly fade
caged in a man made; hell

From My Perspective

hope you can feel my story
aint no pain in glory
in a place that consists of conniving smiles
and wicked profiles
where there's blind tension and hearts gone cold
to the states we're sold
placed in a 12 by 8
where one could contemplate
is it my future or fate
here's where a mind can corrupt
and give purpose to destruct
it's a mind reminiscing on memories
that slowly fade
caged in a man made; hell
left with wonder and confusion
shackled illusions
"dreaming to escape"
for the feeling is a scattered memory

The Beat With Out

EUGENE WEEMS *Eugene Weems, an OG writer for The Beat Without, was formerly incarcerated in Salinas Valley in Soledad State Prison. He has recently been transferred to Rancho Cucamonga and recruits brave new writers for The Beat Without wherever he goes.*

When Weems was free, he created several successful businesses in Las Vegas Nevada, including "No Question Apparel," a line of clothes. Weems writes romantic poems and short stories, full of daring, close calls, love and fantasy. Here's his new long short story for you. It packs plenty of drama!

Injustice To The Mind

"Baby Girl! Pull right up in this parking lot and keep the car running. I'll be right back," Black instructed, before leaning over to kiss Heather on the right side of her cheek and exiting the four-door white Lexus.

Heather sat in wonder as she watched Black walk to the side of a building and vanish from her sight. She was in love with Black, the man of her dreams she thought of him to be--tall, dark and handsome, with a gentlemanly personality and thug ways that excited her even more as to why she was so in love with him, she assured herself.

"Bang! Bang!" the sound of a car backfiring. Heather glanced through the rear view mirror to observe where the sound had come from. She looked around and saw no one in sight and several seconds later she noticed Black walking calmly from around the brick building with a bottle of orange juice in his hand, headed towards the car. He took a sip of the orange juice before entering the car. "Huh, baby, I got this for you. I thought you might be thirsty," said Black.

"Yeah, right! You know I am allergic to orange juice."

"Damn, am I bad. I'll drink it then."

"That's what you was doing anyways."

"Girl, stop tripping and let's get up out of here before the police come."

"Black! What do you mean about before the police come? What have you did, Black, for the police to come? You know what? I don't even want to know," said Heather.

"Good! Then I guess you better get up out of here before you find out!" Heather quickly put the Lexus in drive and drove out the empty parking lot. Black reached over and pressed his finger up against the digital screen where the car radio would have been and leaned back into the cocaine-white leather seats, as the screen lit up with the name of a music CD displayed R-Kelly's "Chocolate Factory." The music started to play, taking Black's mind from his thuggish mentality to a romantic move.

"This is my shhh," Black said excitedly. "Baby, do you remember when we first did our thang to this CD? How bomb the loving was?

"Yeah, I remember. Why? Don't be working yourself up, because I'm not giving you none."

"Woman, what's your problem? You still tripping? I see that I'm going to have to shake you for the rest of the night, until you get your mind right. I ain't about to be up around you with no attitude. You and that attitude can hang out with each other. You can drop me off at mom's pad."

"Ninja, what? You are the one tripping and if it's all like that, you can stay at your moma's house for good, because I'm getting tired of your bullshhh. Anyways, your ass don't work or do nothing all day and run the streets all night with your homeboys."

"Hold the hell up, heifer," Black lashed out. "You better check that mouthpiece of yours, before you be missing some teeth. I don't know who the hell you're talking to like that, because I ain't one of those chumps you used to messing with. Don't get Mr. Low Black twisted, because I'll permanently close that mouth of yours for you and dot that eye, so you better stay in a woman's place. I don't know why you feel that you can get me like that. I come from a royal family of gangstas, players and champion hoe slayers, and I'm all three in one."

"Attention, all available units in the vicinity of 99 North Central Avenue in the unincorporated area of Upland. A robbery of the West Side Bank has occurred. Please be advised that the victim described the suspect as an African-American male adult, approximately 6 feet, one inch tall, weighing approximately 218 pounds, wearing a black jacket and a black beanie-typed stocking cap with the logo of a letter N and a question mark down the middle of the N. The suspect is armed and dangerous and possibly on foot, so be advised to take extreme caution in an approach," the sheriff's dispatch informed the units.

"Black! Black!"

"What?"

"Don't look back, but the police is right behind us."

"What? Girl, you better stop playing with me."

"I'm serious. They are following us," said Heather.

"Damn! Don't panic, just keep driving as if everything is all good. I don't think they are tripping on us," Black said, hoping that his assumption is right.

"Black! They just turned on their lights, wanting me to pull over!"

"Heather, you know you can't pull over. I'm dirty. Just keep driving as if you haven't noticed the lights. They haven't turned on their siren yet. Baby, just make a right turn on Central Avenue and punch it."

Heather made the turn and floored the pedal of the 2004 four-door Lexus. The engine roared viciously as it shot off like a rocket. The police quickly gave chase. Heather and Black were now being pursued. It was no turning back now and they both knew that.

"Baby, that's right. Shake these pigs," Black yelled in excitement, looking back as the police gave chase. "Ha, ha, yeah! This is what turns me on about you, when you are in your gangstaette mode. Girl, you are so sexy to me when you are breaking the law."

"You know what, Black? You are crazy. You have a real mental problem, you know that?"

"Baby, they gaining on us." Black knew whatever happened, he had to make sure that Heather was safe and wouldn't get caught up in any of his crime sprees. He reached in his waist and pulled a 40 glock 17-shot handgun. He pulled the side back to inject a round in its chamber. He pressed on one of the electric switches that was located on the passenger side door. The window rolled down. Without a second thought, he reached his arm out the window and ripped off eight consecutive rounds of fire that shattered the police officer's windshield and violently penetrated the hood of their patrol car. The officer's car fishtailed out of control. Heather took complete advantage of the moment and quickly made a right at the corner street, losing sight of the officers.

"Stop the car!" yelled Black. "Stop the car and get out," he demanded. Heather quickly hit the brakes, bringing the Lexus to a stop. "Here, take this and get out!" Black said, as he passed her a brown paper bag filled with money from up under his jacket. "Get out and go. I'll meet you at home."

Heather got out the car and ran into a shopping mall area. Black hopped into the driver's seat and floored the Lexus. The police were now back in pursuit. As Black accelerated the Lexus down 19th Street west of Central Avenue, he noticed that the street was blocked at the end by a wooden barricade. As he approached the end of 19th Street at speeds of 75 MPH, he made a sudden left turn from the paved portion of the roadway and continued into a dirt rock field south of the south roadway edge, while nearly striking an old man who was standing in the field with his dogs. Black lost control of the Lexus, hitting a large boulder that caused the Lexus to become airborne and clunk out.

"Damn!" Black said, while hitting his fist on the steering wheel in anger that the car went dead. He looked back and noticed that the patrol car had pulled up to the rear of the Lexus. Both of the officers were not out their car with their guns drawn.

Black quickly crawled out through the passenger side window and began running. "Freeze right there! I said, 'Freeze right there!' This is the police," yelled the officer, as he continued to give foot pursuit.

"This is Officer Lay. 454 CHP advising CHP dispatch that I and my partner Forman are in foot pursuit of the possible West Side bank robber. Please send additional units to 19th Street west of Central Avenue."

"Roger that, 454 CHP. Back up is on their way. Over an' out," replied the dispatch.

Black looked over his left shoulder at the officer. He reached for his gun while trying to run through some large bushes and tripped and fell to the ground. The gun went flying to the ground in two. Black quickly retrieved the gun and realized that the clip had fallen out. "Motha..., Man!" Black mumbled angrily and sprung up quickly to his feet.

"Hold it right there, guy. Don't make me shoot you," Officer Forman ordered. "Lie down on the ground!"

Black looked around and wondered if he should take his chances running again. He slowly decided to comply with the

continued on next page

The Beat With Out

You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law.

EUGENE WEEMS (CONT.)

continued from previous page

officer's instructions.

"Sir, keep your hands where I can see them. I said, 'Keep your hands where I can see them.' Do as I say, place your hands on your head. Now, with your right arm, bring it behind you. Now do the same with your left hand. Sir, I am placing you under arrest. I'm going to read you your rights. You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law. You have the right to talk with an attorney and to have an attorney present before and during questioning. If you cannot afford an attorney, one will be appointed free of charge to represent you before and during questioning, if you desire. Do you understand each of these rights I have explained to you?"

"Yeah, I understand them. I'll be out of jail in no time, as soon as I get to a phone," Black said sarcastically. "You chumps don't got nothing on me but an attempt to evade an officer. That's a simple misdemeanor."

"Well, sir, we have more than that. Try attempted murder on police officers, with a string of other charges."

"Yeah, right! Just hurry and get me down to he station and book me in, so I can bail out," said Black.

"What? You're thinking about bailing out with that robbery money you just stole? I believe that is not going to happen. Your luck has just run out for you."

"Damn! You sure do got these handcuffs on hella tight! They feel like they cutting through my skin. How about loosening them some?"

"Tough guy! You just going to have to deal with them, because I'm not loosening them. On the count of three I'm going to help you up off the ground. One, two, three."

Officer Foreman helped Black to his feet and began conducting a body search on his person. He noticed a large bulge in Black's left front jacket pocket. "Well, well. What do we have here?" The officer removed a large sum of money from Black's jacket pocket that was in various denominations. "I guess this isn't yours?" Foreman asked Black as he showed him the money that was just removed from his person. "Hell, yeah, that's my money. Whose else do you think it is?" Black said angrily. Officer Forman informed his partner to take the perpetrator and place him inside the back of the patrol car while he conducted a field search, to assure that nothing had been dropped.

After the field search was conducted, Black was taken to the San Bernardino County Jail and booked on seven counts--Attempted murder on two police officers, Second degree robbery, Possession of a controlled substance, Evading an officer, Willful disregard, Possession of a firearm by a felon, and Resisting, obstruction, delay of a peace officer, or EMT.

"Say, folks, where you from, homie?" a deep voice came out from a crowd of eight inmates who were being booked into country jail.

Black made no attempt to respond to the question; his mind was focused on getting to a phone. He walked inside the booking cell and headed to the phone. "Say, homie, let me get next on that phone."

The Mexican motioned his head in an upper nod in agreement. Black took a seat on the wooden bench next to the phone, waiting impatiently for his opportunity to make a call.

"Say, folks, where you from, people?" The same deep voice asked the question and a stockily built, light complexioned, tall male moved in the direction of Black.

Black lifted his head up and noticed the man walking towards him. He stood up, now making eye contact with the man. "Say, ninja, what is it to you where I'm from? That's any of your business?"

"Hold up, bra! I didn't mean nothing by that. I was just trying to find out was you from Dino, that's all."

"Naw, I'm not from no San Bernardino or nowhere from California. I'm from Las Vegas, pimp! Anything else you want to know about a gangsta's business, pimp? If not, then give me fifty feet, because I'm not trying to make no friends, pimp!" said Black.

"Peace, bra! Peace!" the man said and walked to the other side of the room and made conversation with another inmate.

"Say, homie! How long are you going to be on the phone? I have an emergency call to make. I'll appreciate if you would give me some action right now, to call my people."

"A homes, un momento, por favor," said the Mexican.

"Ninja, I don't speak no damn Spanish. Speak English to me, comprendo? Do you understand that?" Black lashed out in anger.

"Mi hija. Yo habla tu manana, buenas noches," the guy said before hanging up the phone.

"Say, loco, what's your problem, homes, disrespecting me and my familia? Do you have a problem with me, homes?

"Ha ha," Black burst into laughter, finding the Mexican's aggressive stands to be funny and untimid.

"Homes, what are you laughing at? Do you want a piece of me, homes?"

Black couldn't help but to keep laughing; he found the man to be humorous. The more he thought about how could he ever let a four foot, three inch midget whip him. He found that to be hilarious.

Black liked the lil' guy's fearless attitude. "My friend, I have no problem with you," Black said with a smirk on his face. "I just need to make a call and you can get the phone back."

"OK, homes. Next time don't be pushing up on me like that," the man said with authority. Black smiled and agreed to give the little guy his respect, just to make him feel good. They both shook hands and Black quickly headed to the phone. He pressed the number one to get a dial tone and entered the area code and the number.

"Hello!" the sexy sound of a woman's voice answered. "Baby, what's up?"

"I need you to bail me out. I'm at the San Bernardino County Jail."

"Yeah, I know. The police called me about my car, to inform me that it was being held by the police for evidence, because it had been used in a robbery and a high-speed chase. I've called our bail bondsman and he said you have no bail, but you have court tomorrow at 9am in Department five. I'll be there with our lawyer. Your lawyer said 'Everything is all good,' so don't worry."

"Baby, you know I ain't tripping. I know you got me. I'm a G; I'm going to deal with whatever comes my way, because I laid the bed, but I'm not trying to sleep in it, you feel me? Well, I guess tomorrow I'll get a bail and be home in time to catch Comic View on BET, huh?

"You know what, Black? I can't believe you thinking about looking at a TV show. You could have at least said you wanted to be with me!"

"Girl, you already know I want to be with you."

"Yeah, whatever, Black. Don't try to clean it up now!"

"Heather, you know I love you, don't you?

"Yeah!"

"So why is you acting like that? You shouldn't always read into things, woman. You already know that I'm burnt and some things go without being said."

"Phone check, boy!" The sound of a squeaky voice took Black by surprise.

"Ain't this a...!?" Black said aggressively, as he turned around to see who was the chump pushing up on him.

"Whoa! What's up, Big Guy?" The huge frame that stood only feet away from Black looked like a big grizzly bear, standing on its two hind legs. The man had to be at least 350 pounds and stood at the height of 6 feet, 7 inches, who resembled a Sumo wrestler, but the only difference, this guy was White with a long beard that flowed to the middle of his chest. Black sized the man up and took a deep breath, wondering if he should just overlook the situation just this one time and allow the man to use the phone. Black mustered up the courage to speak. "Say, Big Guy, did you say that you need to use this phone?"

"Boy, I believe I did. That's what 'phone check' means,

continued on next page

EUGENE WEEMS (CONT.)

continued from previous page

as you colored folks would say." Black's face quickly found it self wrinkling from the man's racial quote, but didn't want to react to the man's comments and rude behavior to avoid an unmatched fight with the big beast of a man.

"Big Guy, just let me tell my girl good night, and you can have the phone," said Black.

"A, homes, what about me?" the lil' midget said. "I thought you said I was next!"

"Be quiet, Little guy! Do you see, I mean, hear the man? He said he needs to use the phone," Black stuttered.

"Homes, you's a punk. You just scared of the wood and you are acting like a little wimp."

"Say, little punk, I ain't scared of you, little hush puppy. I'll stomp you into the ground, so you better silence that big mouth you have on that little body quickly."

"Why you want to jump on little ol' me so fast? Why don't you fight that big wood right there, who's punking you off the phone? He's the one who told you 'phone check,' not me!"

"Did I tell you to silence that mouth? Now I'm going to do it for you." Black motioned towards the midget in an aggressive manner. The husky man quickly grabbed Black by the throat with his huge right hand and lifted him off the ground. Black tried to pry the man's hand from his throat, but his attempt was to no avail. The man was squeezing the life out of him. Black punched the man on his arm several times, until his death grip was released, falling to the ground, now teary-eyed and gasping for air. The man quickly lifted Black into the air and immediately reintroduced his body back to the concrete floor, body slamming him directly on his back, knocking the wind from his lungs.

Black crawled to his feet. Now semi-unconscious, he tried to compose his self, now standing in a fighting stance, facing the huge man. The man rushed at Black with full force. Black released a right, snapping thrust kick to the man's stomach that stopped him in his tracks immediately, then a consecutive left roundhouse kick to the guy's left thigh that brought him down to his knees. That followed with a flurry of lefts and rights and uppercuts and hooks to the face, knocking the man unconscious. The huge man hit the floor like a sack of potatoes. Black wasn't taking any chances of the man getting back up, so he continued to kick the guy repeatedly to the head and rib cage.

"Hey, move away from that guy now," a deputy yelled out, as he noticed what was taking place. Black ignored the demand. The deputy pushed the alarm button that rested on the side of his utility belt.

The deputy back-up team came quickly, then immediately sprayed Black with their side cans of OC Pepper Spray, to get him to cease his assault, but the pepper spray was to no avail. The sergeant moved in range and aimed the block gun and fired. The hard rubber ball struck Black in the chest area, lifting him off his feet.

The deputies wasted no time; they quickly moved in on Black. They introduced wild knees to his face, back and rib cage, as they handcuffed him and placed shackles on his legs. They hauled Black out the holding cell and placed him in a rubber room. They stripped away his clothes, leaving him in the nude. The toxic fumes of the OC Pepper Spray let him gasping for air, as the chemical substance slowly burned his skin.

"I can't see!" he cried out. "I can't see, my eyes are burning, deputy!" he yelled out, but got no aid. He began to crawl on the floor, feeling around for a sink or toilet, so he could flush his eyes with water. There wasn't nothing in the cell, Black came to assure himself, after crawling around every inch of the small padded cell. He couldn't even tell where the door was, because that was also padded. He began yelling for the deputies again, yelling that he couldn't breathe and couldn't see.

Within minutes his cries became silent. A deputy decided he would check on Black. He slid open the medal flap that covered the small slit window and looked in. He noticed Black was lying flat on his face, not moving. The deputy called Black's name, but got no response or movement. "Mr. Low Black, can you hear me?? Black was unconscious. "Mr. Low Black! Can you hear me?"

The deputy called back up and keyed open the cell door and went in. They quickly handcuffed Black behind his back and carried him to the jail hospital. They noticed how swollen his eyes and throat were and red his skin became, as they transported him to the hospital. Two jailhouse nurses waited on Black.

The handcuffs have to come off this man," the senior nurse ordered. "Get an oxygen tank and a number two mouth and nose mask," she requested of her assistant. "What happened here, deputies?"

"He was sprayed with OC Pepper Spray."

"It looks like he was sprayed with more than any type of pepper spray. For one, he's having an allergic reaction and the swelling of his neck is cutting off his windpipe. It's good that you brought him down when you did, because you would have had a death on your hands. This shhh I'm about to give him should immediately start working and taking down the internal swelling, but what I'm concerned about is where that bruise came from that's in the middle of his chest?" asked the nurse.

"He was shot with the block gun during the altercation," informed the deputy.

"Well, that explains it. That's why I was asking you about what happened to this man. We must take him to the outside hospital for x-rays."

"Yes, ma'am. I'll inform the captain concerning the matter," said the deputy.

Black was transferred to the outside Rancho Cucamonga Hospital. There they took x-rays for any fractures or internal bleeding and ordered him back to jail within hours. He was now conscious. He looked in the mirror and noticed how swollen his eyes were. The left eye was bruised and now turning colors. He felt his eye. "Oh, that's how we are getting down," he spoke out loud to himself. "These pigs want to play like this. Just wait until I get out," he said to his self.

Black went and lay back down. He was still dizzy from the medication that was given to him. He was too tired to stay awake, so he closed his eyes and was immediately sound asleep.

"Black, you have court," the voice came over the room intercom.

"What?" Black asked, still half-asleep.

"You have court this morning."

Black felt that he had just laid down an' closed his eyes. He quickly got up and realized that his back was sore and the pain had slowed his movement down. He began washing his face and taking a birdbath in the sink, washing away the OC Pepper Spray from his body. He brushed his teeth and then looked at his eye. His left eye was now completely black and blue. He smiled to himself and told himself that this comes with the lifestyle he chose to live. He then pushed the button on the intercom and told the deputy he was ready to be taken to court.

His cell door popped open. Waiting at the grill gate were two deputies. Black thought to himself should he take off on the two deputies? He quickly decided that he didn't want to be sprayed with any more of that pepper spray. The pepper spray made a believer out of him and he wanted no more part of it.

The officer placed handcuffs and ankle chains on him and escorted Black to the sally port, where a bus waited to transport him to court. He made it to the courthouse within minutes. He was the first inmate to be called.

"Is there a Mr. Low Black in here? Booking number 2256562?" the bailiff called out.

"Yes, that me," Black said as he stood up.

escorted Black to the sally port, where a bus waited to transport him to court.

continued on next page

Count 4. Alleges possession of a controlled substance, violation of the Health and Safety Code Section 11350, a felony.

EUGENE WEEMS (CONT.)

continued from previous page

"It's time for court. You going to Department 5."

Black entered the courtroom and immediately greeted his girl with a smile as she sat in the court's bleachers. His attorney addressed his presence and the judge began the proceedings.

"The People of the State of California vs. Mr. Low Black, the defendant. In Rancho Cucamonga, California, In Department #5. My name is Lisa W. Weems, the judge who will be hearing your preliminary hearing. Appearances: The defendant with his counsel, Robert T. Smith, private attorney. The People of the State of California, represented by James Tardy, Deputy District Attorney. Clarra L. Penny, CSR Official Reporter, 9908."

The court: "In the Matter of the People vs. Mr. Low Black. Mr. Low Black is present, both attorneys are present. There are two files here: #ABC 666-M, and UBN 357-P. I understand these are double filings, Mr. Tardy."

"Yes, Your Honor. And the People would make a motion to dismiss file #ABC 666-M."

"The motion is granted," said the judge. That file is dismissed. That case is dismissed, so we will proceed with case #UBN 357-P."

"The complaint alleges:

Count 1. Attempted murder on a peace officer.

Count 2. Attempted murder on a peace officer.

Count 3. Evading an officer, willful disregard, penal code section
2800.2 (A) a felony.

Count 4. Alleges possession of a controlled substance, violation of the Health and Safety Code Section 11350, a felony.

Count 5. Alleges possession of a firearm by a felon with priors and
the prior.

Count 6. Alleges misdemeanor obstruction, delaying or resisting.

Count 7. Second-degree robbery.

"How many witnesses, Mr. Tardy?"

"Two, your Honor."

"Any motions?"

Mr. Smith, "Motion to exclude all witnesses."

"Granted. Who is your designated officer, Mr. Tardy?"

"Actually, your Honor, the People would designate Officer Mr. Cobby Lay Well as the investigating officer."

"Who is your first witness, Mr. Tardy?

"The people call Officer Cobby Lay Well."

"Very well, go ahead," said the judge.

"Mr. Cobby Lay Well called as a witness by the People."

"Mr. Well, my clerk will be asking you a few questions. Please answer the questions as clearly as possible," said the judge.

"Go ahead, Shanta."

"Officer Well, do you solemnly state that the testimony you shall give in this issue shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?"

"I do!"

"Thank you. Please be seated. Please state your full name for the record, spelling your first and last."

"Mr. Cobby Lay Well. C-O-B-B-Y L-A-Y W-E-L-L."

"Thank you," said the judge. "You may proceed, Mr. Tardy. You may do your direct examination."

"Thank you, Your Honor. Mr. Well, what is your occupation?"

"I'm an officer with the California Highway Patrol."

"How long have you worked as a police officer for the highway patrol?"

"Since my entrance into the academy. Excuse me, since my graduation from the academy, approximately three and a half years."

"Have you taken and completed a post-certified course regarding investigation, report writing and testifying at preliminary hearings?"

"Yes, I have."

"Wait one moment!" said the judge. "I'm going to stop the proceedings and inform the defendant of his rights. Mr. Black, during the hearing, your attorney needs to listen to the questions, make objections, and I need to hear the witnesses and the reporter needs to put down what is happening. Hold on to your thoughts. Talk to your attorney after the hearing. Do you understand, Mr. Black?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"If you need time, write notes to him and he will stop the proceedings if there is a need for it. Do you understand, Mr. Black?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Go ahead, Mr. Tardy."

"Thank you, Your Honor. Where was I? Oh, were you on duty on April first of this year?"

"Yes, I was."

"On that date, at around 11:00 in the evening, were you on patrol near the area of 19th Street?"

"Yes, I was."

"Is that located in the county of San Bernardino?"

"Yes, it is."

"Were you in uniform that night?"

"Yes, I was."

"How is the patrol car marked?"

"It's a black and white patrol vehicle. It has the CHP star on both doors and it indicates "Highway Patrol" on both doors, as well as the trunk. I activated my forward red light and my wig wag lights and also the driver's side red spots."

"Did you activate your siren at any point?"

"No, I didn't."

"So you never activated your siren, is that correct?"

"Yes, that's correct."

"Well, let's skip to the actual arrest. Tell me what happened and what you found after the arrest of Mr. Black."

"On my way back to the patrol car, I followed the same path that I pursued after the defendant. I then noticed a black handgun lying on the ground. I noticed the clip was not in the gun. I also found a black stocking cap several feet on the same path. When I conducted a body search on Mr. Black, I found numerous denominations of money in his jacket, as well as a clear plastic baggy containing a number of small white rocks."

"Your Honor, I have no further questions for the witness," said Mr. Tardy.

"Thank you. Mr. Smith, you may now conduct cross-examination."

"Thank you, Your Honor. Mr. Well, I have only two questions. The first one is: When you found alleged money and drugs on my client, what did you do with them? Did you show my client the items you allegedly found?

"When I conducted a body search, I found the money and drugs. I questioned Mr. Black about the money, but I didn't ask him about the drugs. He told me the money was his and I placed the drugs and money back into his jacket pocket and had my partner place him in the patrol car while I went back to search the area."

"Now my second question I have is: You chased after my client, and at that point in time you never lost visual contact, you never saw him throw anything down, is that correct?"

"That's correct."

"Your Honor, I have nothing further."

"Well, gentlemen, anything else?

"No, your Honor."

"Mr. Tardy, are you going to redirect?"

"No, Your Honor. The People don't wish to be heard any more. The People move the defendant to be held to answer for any and all crimes established by the evidence."

"Well, as the Hearing Judge, I see the defense has no affirmative defense, and both parties have rested."

"Excuse me, Your Honor. I wish to be heard briefly, if I may," said Mr. Smith.

"Go ahead, Mr. Smith."

"With respect to Counts 1, 2, 7, I ask the court not to hold my client to answer. That's the attempted murders and

continued on next page

EUGENE WEEMS (CONT.)

injustice by society has been done to him from the very moment he was born with a dark skin tone

continued from previous page

the robbery charges. There's been no evidence offered at all concerning that, Mr. Black, in fact, was the person who was or had committed the allegations. You heard no testimony of these crimes even happening within this hearing. With respect to Count 3, evading an officer. The police officer did not activate his siren. All that he had done was turn on his lights and I think, given that it was a CHP officer suspected, and rightly so, given his experience and background, that Mr. Black was possibly driving under the influence of alcohol. Officer Lay was going to follow him for a period of time to basically buttress that opinion, and, therefore, there was no evidence that Mr. Black was driving in wanton disregard for the safety of others and/or property.

"With respect for Count 5: possession of a firearm by a felon, I ask the Court not to hold him to answer. There is clearly no evidence that Mr. Black actually had possession or actual constructive possession of the gun. The officer's testimony was that as Mr. Black exited the vehicle, he, the officer, saw Mr. Black immediately start running and he, the officer, pursued Mr. Black and had done so in a direct line. He had never observed Mr. Black throw, or toss, or drop anything. There's no evidence that the gun had recently been placed there. There's no evidence that the gun was there for a long period. There's just no evidence at all without speculation, that this Court can tie that gun to Mr. Black. Therefore, we ask the Court not to hold him for that. We will also move this Court to dismiss all other charges for unsupported information to support a crime. Thank you, your Honor."

"Mr. Tardy, would you wish to be heard on the matter?"

"Your Honor, it's actually very clear as to what was going on this evening, the evening of April 1st. The defendant was in he area, in very close proximity to the West Side Bank. He tried to run from the police and ultimately crashed his car into a boulder. A gun was found at the scene. He had a large sum of money and drugs in his possession. It is very clear that the individual is the one who robbed the bank on that evening and we, the People, would ask the Court to hold him to answer to all counts. The People submit these arguments."

"Objection, Your Honor." Black stood up and shouted. "Objection to all allegations."

"Excuse me, Mr. Black, but you can't make any objections to the district attorney's statements. That is why you have an attorney to make all objections for you," said the judge.

"Well, Your Honor. I believe that I have a constitutional right to address the Court personally."

"Mr. Black, I refuse to have any misbehavior in my courtroom. I suggest you behave or I will have you removed from my courtroom."

"I have a right to speak and I want to address those rights. This is my life that we're talking about."

"Calm down, Mr. Black," whispered his attorney.

"Bailiffs, remove this gentleman from this Court. I will not put up with any disrespecting in my courtroom with anyone," said the judge with anger in her voice.

The bailiffs removed Black from the courtroom and placed him in a holding cell by himself. He yelled at the top of his lungs. "I have a constitutional right to be present during my proceedings."

The bailiffs returned back to the courtroom and informed the court Black was secured.

"Thank you," the judge said. "Now let's get back to court business. Counsels, I have completed my investigations and I am ready to rule on all counts. The Court finds that after hearing the evidence in this hearing, I have serious difficulty as to Counts 1,2,7, and obviously Count 5. I have heard nothing that indicates that Count 1,2, and 7 even happened. As for Count 5, I have heard nothing that links this defendant to the firearm, even for purposes of the preliminary hearing. And I hope that there is no gun on my path when I go home today, because if a gun is found on my path of travel, it doesn't mean it was my gun. Unless you have something else that I missed, I will not find any evidence to sustain the Counts. That's a clear-cut decision.

As to Count 3, evading. As far as the felony is concerned, actually you have not only the problem of the siren being activated, you don't even have a violation of traffic. I don't see it. As for the other remaining counts, the Court finds that there is not enough evidence in this hearing sufficient enough to forward the case to a superior court. The money and the drugs weren't properly placed in the chain of custody, so that is tainted evidence and is not supported by any other evidence to the alleged charges. So I am dismissing all charges."

"Thank you, Your Honor," said Mr. Smith.

"Your Honor, but this man attempted to kill peace officers," argued the district attorney.

"Mr. Tardy, I have made my ruling and it's final. The evidence you presented to me was insufficient in its totality. I don't want to hear any more from you about this, or you will be pulling out your check book, because you will be sanctioned, Mr. Tardy."

"It's not over. I'll get him," Mr. Tardy mumbled under his breath, as he snatched his briefcase from the oak wood table and headed out the courtroom, with an upset expression and face red as a cherry.

"Good job, Mr. Tardy," said Mr. Smith in a sarcastic way. Mr. Tardy spun around and said, "I will get him for something if that's the last thing I ever do."

"Don't count on it, guy. Not as long as he has me as his attorney," said Mr. Smith.

Mr. Tardy dropped his briefcase on the ground and walked quickly to where Mr. Smith was and spoke in an angry, low voice. "I see you want to challenge me. Well, we can battle. If you think that your client is about to walk, think again, because I'm about to go re-file and I have officers who have filed assault charges on him during his little tough guy spree in the county jail yesterday, and the officers will testify against him."

Mr. Smith walked closer to Mr. Tardy and now was only inches from his face. "Now listen here, peon. I do not care about your threats about my client. You are not in my league to beat me out in anything. I can't see how you ever passed the bar exam to even become an attorney, because what you showed me today in this courtroom, you are just a beginner and you're playing ball out your league. So do what you must, because you really haven't seen what I can do, chump! Now please excuse yourself out my face, Mr. Tardy, before my past instincts resurface. Thank you. Now let me do what I was paid for and go see my client, to let him know that he's getting out today."

Mr. Smith walked off and got the bailiff's attention, and informed him he would like to speak with his client. The bailiff escorted Mr. Smith to the attorney and client conference room and brought Black into the room. Black had an angry look on his face as he walked into the room. "How are you holding up? asked Mr. Smith.

Black didn't respond, but just looked at his attorney as if he weren't there.

"Well, I guess you don't want to know what happened in court," said his attorney, Mr. Smith. Black didn't respond. "Well, then, when you feel like talking, just stop by my office when you get out today. I got the case dropped for you, and you should be released in a few hours. I'll see you, bud," his attorney said, as he tapped Black on his right shoulder and exited the room.

Black sat back in disbelief and thought to himself how unjust it was to society to be going free for all the menacing acts he had done, and then he realized how could such a lame thought could have ever entered his mind, when injustice by society has been done to him from the very moment he was born with a dark skin tone.

"Deputy!" he yelled out loud. "Come and get me, because this place is an injustice to the mind, body and soul…"

continued on next page

E-MONEY ***The Beat Within can't go into our summer break without a thoughtful commentary by our old friend E Money. This week E gives us his thoughts on the television, and what role it plays in our lives, from the good to the bad to the ugly, to say the least. E Money writes us from Folsom State Prison in Represa, CA. There is so much to say about E Money, lets simply say we are very honored that he has been a man of his word, since the last time we saw him, many years ago when he was in his last days of juvenile hall awaiting to be taken into the adult system, he told us that he would always keep in touch, and that he has!***

Imagine If There Wasn't Such A Thing As Television?

If there weren't such a thing as television, the only way one will have the knowledge of the world and its evolution would be through the reading and gossiping process. One would find his/her self-reading countless newspapers a day and spending thousands of dollars a month on phone bills, just to know what's going on right here in his/her own country.

The individuals who slack reading or even communicating much would find themselves strangers in their own homeland, yet alone in the world. They would have to use their instincts to judge whether or not each day is going to be sunny or rainy, and they would have to count on other people to inform them of dreadful events such as 911, or the war in Iraq. Even though these individuals may find themselves a lot less judgmental, promoted by their ignorance from the world they live in, they will also be societal victims-physically and not so much mentally.

If there weren't such a thing as television, movie stars and actors would be best known to be at your local theaters in a stage play and the life of acting. Furthermore, sports would prove to be highly unsuccessful. The world would be forced to look at other sources of life for entertainment. Business and organizations around the world wouldn't be successful. Bringing upon America fighting against the development of life, the United States would probably be just as divided as the rest of the world, and a lack of understanding would sweep this nation like a black sky on a sunny day. The American tradition, and also heritage, wouldn't be as strong or effective, and this nation will feel a sense of disconnection. Without television, this image of the United States becomes a bit blurry to the majority of us, and thousands of examples of how to live both positively and negatively suddenly erased.

Although the invention of the television has given America a helping hand in its development, which is a very good thing, I was taught there is a negative to every positive. Therefore, with that said, I believe if there wasn't such a thing as television the systematic education of the mind, or should I say brainwashing wouldn't be as effective as it is today. Maybe the imitation of hundreds of negative icons in television wouldn't be as highly practiced, but instead, you'll see the highly utilized way of thinking. (I like to refer to as stereo-typing), would automatically diminish. Maybe every individual would have the freedom of being perceived, or judged, solely on his/her actions/behavior, and not the actions/behavior of someone who looks like him/her.

If we lived in a world without the existence of television, that would be a world with one less system of enslavement, in contrast, societal knowledge, and a quarter percent of the world wouldn't have any idea of who's the president, yet-let alone what he looks like? The politician world would be more of a systematic, secret society that got all of us lost in a land of wondering, and rumors would rise like Jesus rose on the 7th day, leaving the uneducated vulnerable and gullible to its messages.

I guess the saying is true that reads: "Everything has a price: Whether it's material or mental, it's going to cost you.

Without the existence of television, yes, maybe we would be a lot more free, but do keep in mind that this would only bring upon different, maybe even more dangerous institutions of enslavement. Television, whether you can see it or not, gives you a closer connection with this country we call the United States, and also with the rest of the world. It gives you a chance to meet individuals that maybe you'll never see in real life, yet, alone speak to. It allows you to have a connection with these people that either could be good or bad. It gives you a chance to learn the American way, as well as keep up with the forever evolving world, but it also can enslave you into a systematic thinker. If you don't be careful of what you evaluate as true or false, good or bad, negative or positive. You see, this thing can be your friend or enemy, depending on how you decide to watch it. You are in the driver's seat of your car, and television is like your passenger going where you take it, or allow it to go.

Television came into this world with both miracle and hell attached to it. Unfortunately, the world decided to just pay attention to its miracle and was blind to the fact that television came with another side as company. Why did we play blind? I guess the world was so amazed with the miracle that was presented , that America feared of looking on the other side, from fear of destroying a concept that would simply prove "that it is too good to be true." Therefore, America played blind to a dangerous concept, sort of like your j-walker who plays blind to a speeding truck, and has gotten mentally struck with the belts of brainwashing for doing so.

The television set has been a blessing to America and the world, but it has also served as a mental enslavement that runs a part of this country like robots fulfilling an unknown deed.

In closing, I believe that television has done a lot of us good, and allowed us to live on a much more elevated level because of it. In contrast, I also believe that the television set has brought a lot of us enslavement and robotic thinking.

In my conclusion, I believe that television has been a blessing for those who understand it and know how to watch it without being mentally victimized. In addition, I also believe there should be a law for those who don't understand television, and made prohibited to these individuals until they have proven without reasonable doubt that they have learned this law. It's sort of like the driver's license for a car.

These are my thoughts, manifested from your desire to want to learn, and my desires to want to know. The more I know, the more I want to learn. With each piece of knowledge, my life becomes that much brighter. It's like I'm coming more alive with the more I know, and this is an addiction that will have me sprung for life. Learning is life, and life is living. Never allow yourself to get away from this.

POETIC PRISONER

There are times when we just don't know what to say in response to writing like this. Will Roy — The Beat's own Poetic Prisoner — lays out a series of three poems whose titles reveal their themes: "A Loner," "Mr. Pessimistic," and "Where Were You?" Each is hard-hitting and difficult in its message, and taken together, they paint a picture of a man desperately trying to deal with a world that abandoned him as a child, but wants him now to be their "star attraction" — so they can feel good about themselves. We cannot help him with his struggle, which pains us, but we can predict that he will get through it, and that future poems will show that he did. As to his final piece, "Without The Beat," we have no words at all, just raw emotion.

Where Were You?

As you know, I'm out and maintaining
As best as I can.
Went in as a boy,
Came out as a man.
But now that I'm doing well,
There are people trying to gain fame.
They think they have good intentions,
But they're getting paid off of my pain.
I'm not talking about anybody from The Beat,
I'm talking about professional advocates.
Concluding all of our statements,
While depicting us like savages.
Where were you when my father left me,
And didn't say goodbye?
Where were you when my mother beat me,
Because she believed I shouldn't cry?
Why are you in my life now
That I am out and free?
Before all of this happened,
You didn't even want to know me.
Now I'm testifying at all of your events,
And making you look like a savior.
Why didn't you testify for me
When I was getting punished for my behavior?
Where were you when I took
That first hit of weed?
Where were you when I was a little boy
That nobody wanted to feed?
Now you're calling me off the hook
Because I've become your poster child.
Not realizing that if life is like a roller coaster,
My life is a roller coaster gone wild.
You ask for my input because I have the experience,
But my pockets are emptier than yours.
You probably feel sorry for me,
While counting your money behind closed doors.
Where were you when I was cutting school?
Where were you when I was acting a fool?
Where were you when I drank 'til I passed out?
Where were you when I broke all the rules?
Now you want me on the news
Singing the blues.
Always telling me I don't have to,
But now I choose to refuse.
You're the one who went to college,
You have the degree.
Don't try to make me feel special
By speaking to me now that I'm free.
Where were you
When I was sleeping on park benches?
Where were you when I was fifteen
Getting chased by police and hopping fences?
Where were you
When I was relentless?
Where were you when the world turned its back on me?
Where were you when the violence seemed endless?
Now you want me on your panels
Sitting next to former inmates with no manners.
But I'm not trying to be a part of that stereotype,
So I'm erasing you out of my daily planner.
You wear me like a badge of honor for your organization,
So you never really cared.
For every time I ask where were you
You seem to have never been there.
You exploit the very same hurtful experiences
That you never helped me work through.
So all I have to say to you now,
Is where the hell were you?

Without The Beat

Writing a poem titled 'Without The Beat'
In The Beat Without.
They took a chance on me
When everybody else told me to get out.
I need to give them recognition
For making my life a part of their positive mission.
For taking the time to hear me out
When the rest of the world wouldn't listen.
Thank you Dave,
You've remained consistent throughout the years.
You still challenge my thoughts,
And have become one of my favorite peers.
You wouldn't believe me if I told you this,
But you helped me overcome some of my fears.
And when I act deaf and blind,
You become my eyes and ears.
Thank you Mike,
You're the father I always wanted.
You've become my most adored male role model
You've empowered things in my life that were once haunted.
You say you don't have any advice to give,
But you're just being humble and not telling it like it is.
For after every one of our conversations,
I feel more encouraged to live.
Thank you Donna,
You've been like a second mama.
I envy the way you stay calm
Throughout all the drama.
I respect you as a powerful woman
With an even more powerful mind.
I enjoy conversing with you
Because you teach me something every single time.
Thank you Matt,
Your jokes brighten up my day.
You bring out the clown in me
Even on days when I don't want to play.
You've told me things
That nobody else would say.
You come at me hella real
When most people wouldn't come at me that way.
Thank you Arlene,
My wife for the rest of my life.
You've made my wrongs right,
And still find time to do the things I like.
You're the most important person to me,
You're the only girl I need.
When I lost faith, you believed,
You're the ride or die chick that I want to nurture my seed.
And last but not least,
Thank all of those bold enough to write how they feel.
The many brave, intelligent souls
That participate in workshops and keep it real.
The ones who fill their page every week,
The ones who write until they go to sleep.
The ones who can draw a picture that can teach,
The ones who get up in front of the group and speak.
Without The Beat,
I'd probably be doing the same things I did before.
Without The Beat,
I'd probably be sleeping on a concrete floor.
Without The Beat,
I'd be out of shape and exercising violence.
Without The Beat,
I would've fallen victim to my own silence.
They helped me succeed
When I was in the face of defeat.
I appreciate all of you,
For where would I be without The Beat?

POETIC PRISONER (CONT.)

Mr. Pessimistic

I'm writing this poem to those
Who would call me Mr. Pessimistic.
The ones who are quick to judge
How I deal with what I struggle with.
Optimism gets you nowhere
And it breeds false hope.
Like the man with a needle in his arm,
After telling everyone he'd quit shooting up dope.
Everything seems like a joke
When we focus on good all the time.
And who even said pessimism was negative
What separates good and bad is a very thin line.
I think people who are optimistic
Are negative in their own way.
They pay attention to all that's good,
But that means everything that's bad is here to stay.
They hide their negative emotions
Because they don't want to be seen mad.
Trying to hold on to the same feelings
Their dreams had.
They're less supportive than beanbags
For how can they understand pain?
They act like they never experienced hardships,
But all of them run that same game.
They act like nothing bothers them,
What kind of human being is that?
Just because you make yourself believe things are right,
Doesn't mean everything is on track.
In fact, optimists allow stuff to get out of whack
For the world is in perfect balance.
So when someone is overtly happy at all times
It's not only selfish, but it's also childish.
You can say I'm always mad or sad,
But that's only because I've actually been through it.
You can keep your fake smiles and laughs,
I'd rather be Mr. Pessimistic

A Loner

I came out of the womb by myself,
And when I die I'll only have me.
You only need one ear to hear
That you only need one eye to see.
I don't base my character
On how many friends I have.
And I don't need entertainment
'Cause I can make myself laugh.
Only I really know about my past,
Nobody can ever take that from me.
And now that I look back on the girls that didn't last,
I realize I'm not a dummy.
If I choose to give you my heart,
Then handle it with care.
Don't leave me out in the cold
When I expected you to be there.
I'm a loner,
But when I give myself, I give it all.
However I know that I can't lean on people
If I really want to stand tall.
Sometimes I might fall,
But eventually I'll have to pick myself up.
Because if I relied on this cold world,
I'd eventually be stuck.
I need time to my thoughts,
Sometimes the rest of the world is just too much.
Connecting with people is critical,
But sometimes enough is enough.
For in the end
I'll still see things my way.
I'll still make more cherished memories
With every evening that falls on Friday.
Trying to enjoy life by
Getting high on every highway.
Waking up thinking every day
Is going to be my day.
I stand alone like a leader
Especially when situations are looking meager.
I'm my own best teacher,
And I write because I'm eager.
Trying to stay on people's minds
Like a fever.
And I don't care if people don't like me,
Because that probably means I don't like them either.
So when you see me in my zone
Spaced out like a stoner,
Don't be worried about me
I'm freer when I stand as a loner.

RICHARD RUIZ

Richard Ruiz drops a few lines on us this week. He writes about the funeral scene and is bound to sadden your thoughts. He temporarily writes to us from the Pelican Bay SHU, but we understand he will be released soon. We hope you readers enjoy the following short missive.

Childhood Fantasies

When bell tolls cease the last grain of sand will lay waste, and wisps of heads lowered from heavy tears will point a black streak over the hills.

A finality drawn atop its mighty cab through streets of childhood fantasies across rivers of juvenile dreams past ruins of manhood failures into sovereign invisible night.

Sweet return to mother Earth and the cortege lumbers on with a misty shadow at its side, one bidding their farewells, the other welcoming home one more soul razed and discarded along the road side next to the wilderness of life.

through streets of childhood fantasies across rivers of juvenile dreams past ruins of manhood failures into sovereign invisible night.

The more I know, the more I want to learn. With each piece of knowledge, my life becomes that much brighter. It's like I'm coming more alive with the more I know, and this is an addiction that will have me sprung for life. Learning is life, and life is living. Never allow yourself to get away from this.

check out the rest of E-Money's BWO piece on page 53